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G20
Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav
NAVA KARNATAKA
FOR NAVA BHARAT
Steps for the Welfare of Minority Communities
• Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Residential Schools with CBSE curriculum from 6th to 12th standards have been established in 29 locations in the state for minority community students.
• A 24x7 helpline has been established to address the grievances of minority communities.
• Karnataka Urdu Academy is translating the best literary books of classical languages into the Urdu language.
• A total grant of Rs. 26 crore given to 186 organizations of Jain, Buddhist, Sikh and Christian communities for the construction, renovation and repair of temples/churches/community halls and orphanages and homes of senior citizens.
karnataka information
Shri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister
Shri Basavaraj S. Bommai
Hon'ble Chief Minister

Modi accuses Rahul Gandhi of insulting Basaveshwara

The Hindu Bureau
BELAGAVI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of insulting 12th century social reformer Basaveshwara by raising questions about Indian democracy in London.

The Prime Minister launched an attack on Mr. Rahul Gandhi during his visit to Dharwad for the formal inauguration of the IIT Dharwad campus.

"I am glad to be here in the land of Sri Basaveshwara, who laid the foundation of democracy by instituting the Anubhava Mantapa. A few years ago, I had the honour of unveiling a statue of Sri Basaveshwara in London. But in the same London, some people have raised questions about the democratic system in India. It is so unfortunate that such people have been continually and regularly attacking the Indian democratic system and values. They are dragging it to the court and putting it into the dock. It is unfortunate," he said, without taking the name of the Congress leader.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaking at the inauguration of IIT Dharwad in Dharwad on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"It is unfortunate that questions have been raised on our democracy in London. The roots of our democracy are in our heritage. No power in the world can upset the democratic value systems of India. But some people are continually attacking it. They are insulting Sri Basaveshwara and insulting Karnataka. They are insulting India's great democratic heritage. Such actions insult the 130 crore vigilant citizens of India. Karnataka has to be aware of such people," he said.

"I feel that the Anubhava Mantapa is the greatest of Sri Basaveshwara's contributions. Our democracy has adopted several of the principles that were preached by Sri Basaveshwara in his Anubhava Mantapa. That is why I say India is not only the world's largest democracy, but also the mother of democracy. We are all proud of it," he said. The Prime Minister said that Karnataka was proving to be the engine of high-tech India and it needed the double engine to progress in that direction further.

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, and IIT Dharwad Director Venkappayya R. Desai were present.

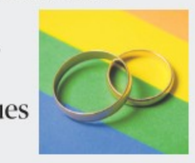
Same-sex union can rock societal values: Centre

Any change in human relationship should come from legislature, not court, Centre says in its affidavit in response to a Supreme Court decision to examine petitions on same-sex marriage

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

> The institution of marriage has a sanctity attached to it, and in major parts of the country, it is regarded as a sacrament, a holy union, and a sanskar

> In our country, despite statutory recognition of the relationship of marriage between a biological man and a biological woman, marriage necessarily depends upon age-old customs, rituals, practices, cultural ethos and societal values
> UNION GOVERNMENT AFFIDAVIT



The Centre, in an affidavit in the Supreme Court, has frowned upon same-sex marriage while invoking the "accepted view" that a marriage between a biological man and woman is a "holy union, a sacrament and a *sanskar*" in India.

"The institution of marriage has a sanctity attached to it and in major parts of the country, it is regarded as a sacrament, a holy union, and a *sanskar*. In our country, despite statutory recognition of the relationship of marriage between a biological man and a biological woman, marriage necessarily depends upon age-old customs, rituals, practices, cultural ethos and societal values," said the 56-page affidavit filed on Sunday. Any "deviation" from this "statutorily, religiously and socially" accepted norm in "human relationship" can only happen through the legislature and not the Supreme Court, the government said.

The affidavit came in response to the court's decision to examine petitions to allow solemnisation of same-sex marriage under the Special Marriage Act, 1954, which provides a civil form of marriage for couples who cannot marry under their personal law.

"Parliament has designed and framed the marriage laws in the country, which are governed by the personal laws and codified laws relatable to customs of various religious communities, to recognise only the union of a man and a woman to be capable of legal sanction, and thereby claim legal and statutory rights and consequences. Any interference with the same would cause a complete havoc with the delicate balance of personal laws in the country and in accepted societal values," the government said.

The government said the court had only decriminalised sexual intercourse between same-sex persons in its 2018 judgment in *Navtej Singh Johar*, and not legitimised this "conduct".

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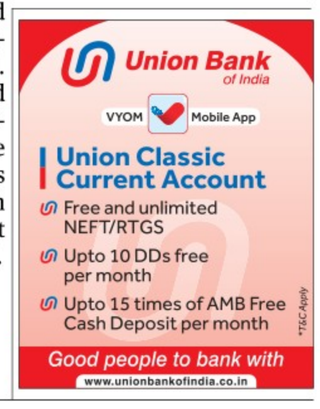
NEARBY

Ticket aspirants from same party begin campaigns

BENGALURU
Multiple Assembly election ticket aspirants from the same party have launched rival campaigns in the same constituencies across the city, creating factionalism and chaos within parties. » Page 3

EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGE 5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Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway inaugurated

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

The 118-km-long Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway was inaugurated on Sunday with Prime Minister Narendra Modi taking a symbolic walk on a small stretch of the highway at Hanakere in Mandya.

He later reached Gejjalagere, the venue of a public meeting, and unveiled a plaque dedicating to the nation the six-lane expressway, which reduces the travel time between Bengaluru and Mysuru from three hours to 75 minutes.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a roadshow in Mandya on Sunday. ANI

The access-controlled expressway between Bengaluru and Mysuru built at a cost of ₹8,480 crore encompasses a portion of National Highway 275 and comprises four rail overbridges, nine significant bridges, 40 minor bridges and 89 underpasses and overpasses, besides a two-lane service road running on either side of the six-lane highway.

The inauguration of the expressway and the laying of foundation stone for the ₹4,130 crore four-lane highway between Mysuru and Kushalnagar at the public meeting at Gejjalagere was preceded by a road show by Mr. Modi through the streets of Mandya.

The crowds that had gathered along the barricaded roads in Mandya waved at the Prime Minister.

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RELATED REPORTS
» PAGE 4

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MAHARASHTRA POLITICS
The aftermath of the 2019 coup
There is quite some renewed speculation about a BJP-NCP backchannel
OPINION » PAGE 7

Silicon Valley Bank 'contagion' may leave India unscathed

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

The failure of the U.S.-based Silicon Valley Bank may only hit some Indian tech start-ups and IT firms for now, while any broader "contagion" effects that may arise will neither reach Indian shores in a hurry nor are they likely to trigger "systemic risks", according to top Finance Ministry officials.

However, the Centre is cognisant of the fact that the key underlying trigger for the bank's woes – rapidly rising U.S. interest rates that have rendered past government bond holdings "underwater", or loss-making securities – could impinge on the operational health of other financial institutions as well.

If these troubles spread, a resultant flight to safety among global investors could hit capital flows into emerging markets such as India and impact the rupee, said a Ministry official tracking developments.

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NO GOVT. BAILOUT
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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

1 In lakh, the number of jobs that are expected to be impacted due to the collapse of the Silicon Valley Bank, Y Combinator said in a petition to the U.S. government on Sunday. Around 10,000 small businesses that had deposits in the Silicon Valley Bank will fail to make payroll in the next 30 days. The petition seeks the attention of the government to provide relief for the immediate impact of the SVB collapse. PTI

161 In $ billion, the profits oil giant Saudi Aramco reported on Sunday for the year 2022. This is a record result for an energy firm crucial to the kingdom's economy. It came off the back of energy prices rising after Russia launched its war on Ukraine, with sanctions limiting the sale of Moscow's oil and natural gas in Western markets. The profits rose by 46.5% when compared to the company's 2021 results. PTI

100 The number of arrests in Iran over the mystery poisonings of thousands of schoolgirls. Iran has blamed those protests, which it commonly labels "riots", on hostile forces abroad linked to its archfoes the United States, Israel and their allies. More than 5,000 pupils have been affected in poisoning cases in approximately 230 schools across 25 of Iran's 31 provinces, the latest official tally said. AFP

1.03 In ₹ lakh crore, the combined erosion faced by eight of the top 10 valued firms in market valuation last week, with Reliance Industries and ICICI Bank taking the biggest hit amid an overall weak trend in equities. Barring Bharti Airtel and ITC, eight firms suffered erosion of market capitalisation. The market valuation of the Reliance Industries plummeted the most by ₹41,878.37 crore. PTI

3.73 In lakh, the number of arms licences in Punjab with Gurdaspur having the maximum of them, the State assembly was informed. The State government has cancelled 813 arms licences and of them, 89 belonged to persons who had a criminal background. The AAP government in November last year had banned public display of songs promoting gun culture. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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The rise of the ESG regulations

What are environment, social and governance regulations and how do they differ from corporate social responsibility rules? Why are the regulations important for the Indian economy? Will ESG compliance help Indian companies play a more prominent role in global supply chains?

EXPLAINER

Mintz Group

The story so far:

Over the last decade, regulators and corporations around the world have embraced the idea that businesses should be measured not just on traditional economic metrics such as shareholder return, but also by their environmental impact, commitment to social issues and the soundness of their corporate governance and protection of shareholder rights. While this development is partially due to the belief that companies have a distinct responsibility as corporate citizens, the main driver is the realisation that environmental, social and governance ("ESG") considerations need to be included by investors in a company's risk profile in order to accurately assess the enterprise. The evolution of ESG laws and regulations is, however, still at a nascent stage in India, where the focus is often on providing protections regarding the environment or workplace conditions without also incorporating the controls and disclosure that are a hallmark of contemporary ESG regulation.

GETTY IMAGES

How ESG differs from CSR?

India has a robust corporate social responsibility (CSR) policy that mandates that corporations engage in initiatives that contribute to the welfare of society. This mandate was codified into law with the passage of the 2014 and 2021 amendments to the Companies Act of 2013.

The amendments require companies with a net worth of ₹500 crore (approximately $60 million) or a minimum turnover of ₹1,000 crore (approximately $120 million) or a net profit of ₹5 crore (approximately $6,05,800) in any given financial year spend at least 2% of their net profit over the preceding three years on CSR activities.

The list of qualifying CSR activities is intentionally broad, ranging from supporting the protection of historically important sites to promoting safe drinking water.

ESG regulations, on the other hand, differ in process and impact. The U.K. Modern Slavery Act, for example, requires companies with business in the U.K. and with annual sales of more than £36 million to publish the efforts they have taken to identify and analyse the risks of human trafficking, child labour and debt bondage in their supply chain; establish internal accountability procedures; evaluate supplier compliance and to train supply chain managers regarding these issues.

Why is ESG relevant in India?

India has long had a number of laws and bodies regarding environmental, social and governance issues, including the Environment Protection Act of 1986, quasi-judicial organisations such as the National Green Tribunal, a range of labour codes and laws governing employee engagement and corporate governance practices. The penalty for violations can be substantial.

While these laws and bodies provide important environmental and social safeguards, new initiatives in India go further, establishing guidelines that emphasise monitoring, quantification and disclosure, akin to ESG requirements found in other parts of the world.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), responding to the increase in ESG investing and the demand by investors for information on ESG risks, substantially revised the annual Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR) required by the 1,000 largest listed companies in India.

SEBI describes the current report format as a "notable departure" from previous disclosure requirements, which are aligned with evolving global standards and place "considerable emphasis on quantifiable metrics" to allow companies to engage meaningfully with stakeholders and to enhance investor decision making. Disclosures range from greenhouse gas emissions to the company's gender and social diversity.

Further legislation regarding ESG are likely, given the increased emphasis by the Indian government on ESG issues, which can be seen in India's more active role in global climate forums as well as in specific policy developments, such as the announcement in January by the Reserve Bank of India that it would be auctioning ₹80 billion ($981 million) in green bonds.

What are the implications for Indian companies?

Compliance with ESG regulations – both originating in India and elsewhere around the world – thus, pose a significantly different challenge than India's CSR regulations.

In particular, compliance by Indian companies with the ESG regulations of the U.S., the U.K., the European Union and elsewhere will be critical if India is to take full advantage of the growing decoupling from China and play a more prominent role in global supply chains and the global marketplace overall.

As Indian companies look to expand their ESG risk management, thorough due diligence will play a key role. However, this requires more than having sub-suppliers fill out a questionnaire. Due diligence that can stand up to scrutiny means going deeper. Depending on the situation, this can include looking at company records, interviewing former employees and making discreet visits to observe operations to ensure that the measures to comply with international ESG standards are in effect.

Companies that wish to maximise their opportunities in the global economy need to embrace these new requirements and adjust their organisations accordingly.

Mintz Group is a corporate investigation firm that gathers information before hiring, before transactions, during litigation disputes and after frauds, all over the world

THE GIST

- The evolution of ESG laws and regulations is still at a nascent stage in India, where the focus is often on providing protections regarding the environment or workplace conditions without also incorporating the controls and disclosure that are a hallmark of contemporary ESG regulation.
- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), responding to the increase in ESG investing and the demand by investors for information on ESG risks, substantially revised the annual Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR) required by the 1,000 largest listed companies in India.
- Further legislation regarding ESG are likely, given the increased emphasis by the Indian government on ESG issues, which can be seen in India's more active role in global climate forums.

What is Rajasthan's Right to Health Bill?

What services will residents be entitled to if passed? Does the Constitution guarantee the right to health? Why are private hospitals opposing it?

Saumya Kalia

The story so far:

The recently concluded Budget session of the Rajasthan Assembly revived the debate around the Right to Health Bill. The legislation, if passed, will provide mandatory free and affordable medical services in hospitals, clinics and laboratories – both public and privately owned. Private hospital doctors object to the Bill citing it is hastily drafted, ignores ground realities and may tighten norms in an already over-regulated field.

What does the Bill say?

The Congress-led government tabled the Right to Healthcare Bill, 2022 in the Rajasthan State Assembly in September 2022. The Bill provides rights to patients and healthcare providers, places the obligation on the government to protect these legal rights and mandates the setting up of grievance redressal mechanisms. Rajasthan residents will be entitled to free check-ups, drugs, diagnostics, emergency transport and care at all public health institutes, along with affordable surgeries. The Bill frames medical services as a public service rather than a vehicle for making money. If enacted, the Act will have a recurring annual expenditure of ₹14.5 crore.

Clause 3 of the Bill lays down 20 rights a State resident will be entitled to – including the right to informed consent, to seek information (in the form of medical records and documents) regarding diagnosis and treatment, and to receive treatment without discrimination based on caste, class, age, gender, etc.

Clause 4 of the Bill shifts the burden of responsibility in providing adequate medical services to the government. The government is "obligated" to provide funds, set up institutions and constitute grievance redressal systems.

Clause 4 mandates that the government develop a Human Resource Policy for health ensuring equitable distribution of doctors, nurses and healthcare workers at all levels of the system across regions.

Does the Constitution guarantee a right to health?

The Indian Constitution does not explicitly talk about a right to health. A "right to health", in theory, is derived from the right to life and liberty as guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Previously, courts have highlighted the State's obligation to protect and promote the health of citizens, pointing to Constitutional provisions such as Article 38 (promoting the welfare of people) and Article 47 (which directs the government to meet the nutrition and health requirements of the population).

Why are people opposed to it?

The staunchest resistance to the Bill has come from private healthcare providers, owing to the ambiguity around who will pay for the mandatory free-of-cost emergency treatment. A pamphlet in circulation across the States, published by a "Joint Action Committee", lists the Bill's other alleged shortcomings: that it abdicates the State's responsibility in providing health protection and puts a larger patient load on the private sector.

After protests, the government has agreed to create a fund to reimburse any emergency care offered by the private sector.

Further, doctors argue the Bill is both futile and an exercise in over-regulation. Clinics and hospitals are required to abide by State regulations and norms.

Health activists and civil society members agree the Bill, in its current form, is a "diluted" version of the draft which activists and *Jan Swasthya Abhiyaan* submitted to the government in 2019.

Moreover, there's no mention of a designated time frame within which the rules must be framed and the Bill loosely mentions the term "guarantee" – which makes the actual execution of an Act ambiguous.

THE GIST

- The Bill provides rights to patients and healthcare providers, places the obligation on the government to protect these legal rights and mandates the setting up of grievance redressal mechanisms.
- Rajasthan residents will be entitled to free check-ups, drugs, diagnostics, emergency transport and care at all public health institutes, along with affordable surgeries.
- Doctors argue the Bill is both futile and an exercise in over-regulation. Clinics and hospitals are required to abide by State regulations and norms.

Man held for killing stepson over row with second wife

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bagalur police have arrested a 33-year-old truck driver who allegedly killed his stepson and dumped the body in a lake near KGF over a domestic row with his second wife on February 20.

The accused Sampath married Pushpa, who was his second wife, a year ago. Pushpa was married earlier and had separated from her husband, with whom she had two children.

Sampath used to fight with Pushpa frequently suspecting her fidelity. Unable to bear this, Pushpa admitted her first son Chethan, 11, to a residential school at Bagalur and started living separately. Sampath tried to patch up with Pushpa, but she did not change her decision.

On February 20, Sampath went to the school, fetched Chethan and took him to Hoskote on his bike on the pretext of taking him on a ride. The accused called Pushpa many times to talk. However, she did not receive his call, said the police. Enraged by this, Sampath took Chethan near Rampura lake near Kyasamballi, near KGF, strangled him to death, threw his body into the lake and returned home, the police said.

Missing complaint

Meanwhile, school authorities, after realising that Chethan had not returned, informed Pushpa. Based on the missing complaint filed by Pushpa, the police tried to track down Sampath. Sensing trouble, Sampath attempted to end his life. He was admitted to a hospital and the police awaited his recovery.

On Sunday, he was questioned and based on his confession, the police rushed to Rampura lake and recovered the highly decomposed body of Chethan.

(Those in distress or those having suicidal tendencies can call Arogya Sahayavani Ph.: 104 for help.)

Mandatory fixing of retro-reflective tape authenticated with QR code deferred

Transport Department puts off the installation of tapes for eight to 10 days; decision comes after opposition from commercial vehicle owners

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Following stiff resistance from commercial vehicle owners, the Transport Department has deferred mandatory fixing of retro- reflective tape and rear marking plate authenticated with QR code.

Transport vehicle owners had alleged that they were not against fixing retro-reflective tapes, but the department's move to authenticate the tape with QR code and asking them to buy the tapes from empanelled agencies go against their interest.

Transport Commissioner S.N. Siddaramappa said they insisted on QR code to avoid any malpractice while issuing the fitness certificates for transport vehicles.

President of the Federation of Karnataka Lorry Owners Association Naveen Reddy said, "Earlier, lorry owners were able to purchase reflective tape ₹48 a metre plus applicable taxes We were purchasing the tapes as per the specifications fixed by the Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI) as directed by the Union government. However, the department in Karnataka with ulterior motives came out with a rule that the tape should be QR code authenticated. This was unwarranted. On the other hand, now the owners are forced to pay anywhere between ₹130 to ₹150 for a metre. We are willing to fix the tapes as specified by the ARAI. Insisting on QR code just to harass the owners and asking them to purchase tapes through a few agencies is not correct."

Mr. Reddy said that after strong opposition, the department deferred the installation of tapes for eight to 10 days.

Transport Commissioner S.N. Siddaramappa said, "Reflective tape was made mandatory as a safety measure. We had insisted on QR code to avoid any malpractice while issuing the Fitness Certificates (FCs) for transport vehicles. Earlier, there were instances of vehicles not being produced, but FCs were issued. We have objections from truck owners and others for this rule. We have postponed the mandatory installation for some time. We will hold a meeting with the representatives of vehicle owners on the issue and resolve the same."

Higher price

When asked about the allegation about higher price fixed for the tape, Mr. Siddaramappa said, "We are not regulating prices of the tapes. As the owners have raised objections, we will talk to the suppliers."

Dynamite blast: Landlord booked

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Annapoorneshwarinagar police have registered a case against the family of an IAS officer and a contractor under the Explosive Substances Act for using dynamite to carry out blast at a construction site.

City-based advocate Somashekhar D.E., a resident of Kuvempu Main Road, Gidadakonenahalli, in his complaint said his house developed cracks due to the explosion. When he questioned them, the accused allegedly threatened him with dire consequences, following which Mr. Somashekhar approached the police and filed a complaint.

On Saturday, an FSL team visited the blast site. The police have now summoned the accused for questioning.

Ejipura flyover: BBMP floats tender for the fourth time

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The long-delayed Ejipura flyover project in Koramangala has got another shot at completion. The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has invited bids for a tender worth ₹143 crore for the fourth time to complete the project.

Officials said earlier, tenders were cancelled for various issues, including price estimation. In March 2022, the State government cancelled the tender awarded to Simplex Infrastructure Ltd. for the construction of a flyover between Ejipura Main Road and Kendriya Sadan in Koramangala as per the directions of the High Court of Karnataka.

In 2022, while cancelling the tender given to Simplex, the Urban Development Department had directed the BBMP to float a fresh tender for the remainder of the work within the project cost of ₹204 crore as per norms of the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act.

Joint assessment

BBMP officials said the new tender was floated after its engineers undertook a joint measurement and assessment exercise with the project consultant.

"We have conducted an assessment of the work done so far. The remaining work should be completed by the new company. This new tender was called after new price adjustment clause was introduced," an official said. Construction of the 2.5-km-long flyover was taken up in May 2017 and the work was to be completed by November 2019. The company failed to complete the project even after the BBMP extended the deadline till December 2020 by imposing a penalty for the delay.

The BBMP had issued several warnings and even served two notices to the contractor for failure to adhere to the revised deadline.

For more than a year, work on the flyover had come to a standstill. This prompted the local MLA and former Minister Ramalinga Reddy to stage a protest along with local residents, who were greatly inconvenienced by the incomplete work.

READER'S MAIL

Stop people from standing near doors on metro trains

Sir, – Many passengers continue to stand near the entry points on metro trains, obstructing the free movement of others, despite onboard announcement to 'keep away from doors'. In such a scenario, it becomes difficult to board and de-board the trains with belongings during peak hours. I request BMRCL authorities to take note of this issue seriously and deploy security staff at vantage points to curb the practice.

N. Nanjundaswamy,
Bengaluru

Address problem areas in Lalbagh

Sir, – Despite frequent works undertaken by the Department of Horticulture in the past towards the renewal and beautification of Lalbagh Botanical Garden, there are still many problem areas that need attention. As a regular visitor, I notice that a large volume of leaves shed during autumn is not cleared for months. The brick walkway alongside the Glass House is dilapidated. At many paved sections, one comes across broken stretches and dangerous protrusions and depressions. As it is, the maintenance of roads and lawns inside the garden is not up to the mark. There are large open spaces where lawns can be laid to enhance greenery. At many spots, the signage affixed by the authorities giving various advisories to visitors is phrased incorrectly, which reflects poorly on the city's image. The city's invaluable lung space and a must-see locale for tourists from all around, Lalbagh needs to be kept in an immaculate shape. Why not we learn how beautifully Sri Lanka maintains its Royal Botanical Garden near Kandy?

Kamal Laddha,
Bengaluru

Security lapse

Sir, – The report on the arrest of a passenger smoking on flight implies that one can board a flight with either a cigarette lighter or a matchbox. Such reports indicate lapses on part of security staff and that punishment for violation of airline rules is inadequate. Passengers need to be made aware of the dangers of smoking on a flight.

K. Narayanan Namboodiri,
Bengaluru

Readers can write to letters.bangalore @thehindu.co.in

National pilot programme on running buses using methanol-blended fuel flagged off

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The national pilot programme on running city buses by using 15% methanol blended fuel (MD15) was flagged off by Union Minister for Road Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari on Sunday.

The Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) has provided some of its buses to Ashok Leyland to carry out field trials for three months. After the trial run, a report will be submitted to the MoRTH and Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas by the NITI Aayog, the agency that conceptualised a roadmap for methanol economy for the country's commercial implementation of the fuel.

The BMTC has provided some of its buses to Ashok Leyland to carry out field trials using blended fuel for three months. SUDHAKARA JAIN

Organisers claim that the MD15 reduces pollution by 20% and the blended fuel is cheaper than diesel. "MD15 can be adopted by diesel vehicles without any modification and can be used as a direct substitution for diesel," stated a press release.

On the occasion, the Minister also flagged off India's first M100 – a methanol prototype truck manufactured by Ashok Leyland.

Chain snatched from homemaker

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Vidyaranyapura police are on the lookout for a man who robbed a gold chain weighing 30 grams from a woman who was returning home along with her two children from a nearby shop on Saturday afternoon.

The victim, Anusuya, 30, a resident of Thindlu, was walking on Canara Bank Road when the accused confronted her. Before she could realise it, he snatched the chain and fled.

Raises an alarm

Anusuya raised an alarm, but the accused managed to escape before passersby came to her help, according to the police.

The Vidyaranyapura police, based on the description provided by the victim, are now verifying CCTV camera footage from in and around the spot to track down the accused.

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

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Office of the Chief Engineer (Kaveri-O&M), 6th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bangalore-09.

Sl. No.	Division	IFT Number	Amount Put to Tender / EMD Amount	Last Date & Time for submission of tender	Date & Time for opening of tender
1.	Kaveri-(Operation & Maintenance)-1	BWSSB/EE(K-O&M)-1/ STR/2830/2022-23 Date: 06-03-2023/(2nd Call)	Rs.49,40,000/- / Rs.1,17,000/-	20-03-2023 upto 4.00 p.m.	23-03-2023 at 4.00 p.m.

Sd/- Executive Engineer (Kaveri-O&M)-1

Office of the Chief Engineer (West), 6th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bangalore-09.

2.	North West-2	BWSSB/EENW-2/TO/ PB/2618/2022-23 Date: 07-03-2023	Rs.55,17,126/- / Rs.1,10,400/-	20-03-2023 upto 4.00 p.m.	21-03-2023 after 4.30 p.m.
3.		BWSSB/EENW-2/TO/ PB/2677/2022-23 Date: 08-03-2023	1. Rs.39,74,011/- / Rs.79,500/-		
4.			2. Rs.24,31,031/- / Rs.50,000/-		
5.			3. Rs.34,99,541/- / Rs.70,000/-		
6.		BWSSB/EENW-2/TO/PB/ 2677/2022-23 Date: 08-03-2023 (Reserved for SC category)	Rs.14,74,306/- / Rs.18,500/-		

Sd/- Executive Engineer (North West)-2

The details regarding the tender and participation in the e-procurement process can be obtained by logging on to **https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in** For further details contact the signed office during working hours.

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PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, PANKAJ GUNVANTRAO LANDE, R/at Jathapath, Maharashtra, have changed my name from PANKAJ LANDE to PANKAJ GUNVANTRAO LANDE, for all future purposes by affidavit dated 10–03–2023, Notary Seshagiri.

AFFIDAVIT

I, K.VIJAYA KRISHNAN W/o R. KRISHNNAN, aged about 55 years R/at Door No.19/A, Lakshmi Nivas, MIG-2, G-3, K H B Colony, Hootagalli, Belavadi, Mysore, Karnataka -570018. 1.That my name is K.VIJAYA KRISHNAN but in my old recorded Secondary School Leaving Certificate my name as R.Vijaya, 2. That I have changed my name as K VIJAYA KRISHNAN on 10.03.2023, 3. At present all the records have my new name 4. I am getting a public notice published to this effect in the newspaper 5. I state that R.Vijaya and the K.VIJAYA KRISHNAN is the name of one and the same person and that is myself. I am executing this declaration to be submitted to the concerned authorities for the change of name. I hereby state that whatever is stated here in above are true to the best of my knowledge. Vide affidavit Dated 10-03-2023 sworn before notary Anupama H.S at Mysore.

PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I Vandana Giridaran D/o Giridaran, W/o Venkatakrishnan J, residing at AM 10 Gopalan Habitat Splendour, I T P L Main Road, C M R IT College, Kundalahalli, Bengaluru, Karnataka- 560037, have changed my name to Vandana Kaarthik for all purposes in future.

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LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE

In the Court of VIII Additional District Judge, Eluru
(SC & ST Court, Eluru)

Between :
Seetamraju Subramanya Chakradhar - Appellant
And
1. Parabathula Prasanna Kumari
2. Evuri Siva Krishna
3. Inala Spandana - Respondents

The Hon'ble Court ordered notice to 2nd Respondent - Evuri Siva Krishna, S/o Prabhakara Rao, Flat No. 002, S.L.V. Spring Field Appartment, Near Manyata Tech Park, Nagavara, Bangolore City, Karnataka State through this paper as he is evading to take notice in the above appeal. Therefore if you have any objection appear before court on 27-3-2023 at 10.30 A.M. Otherwise the case will be decided in your absence.

M. Suryanarayana Murthy
Advocate for Petitioner
Eluru, Eluru Dist., A.P.

Mandavalli Suryanarayana Murthy
Advocate
'Sri Lalita' D.No. 20D-8-7, Vasa Vari Street, Opp. C.P.I. Party Office Lans, R.R.Pet, ELURU - 534 002.

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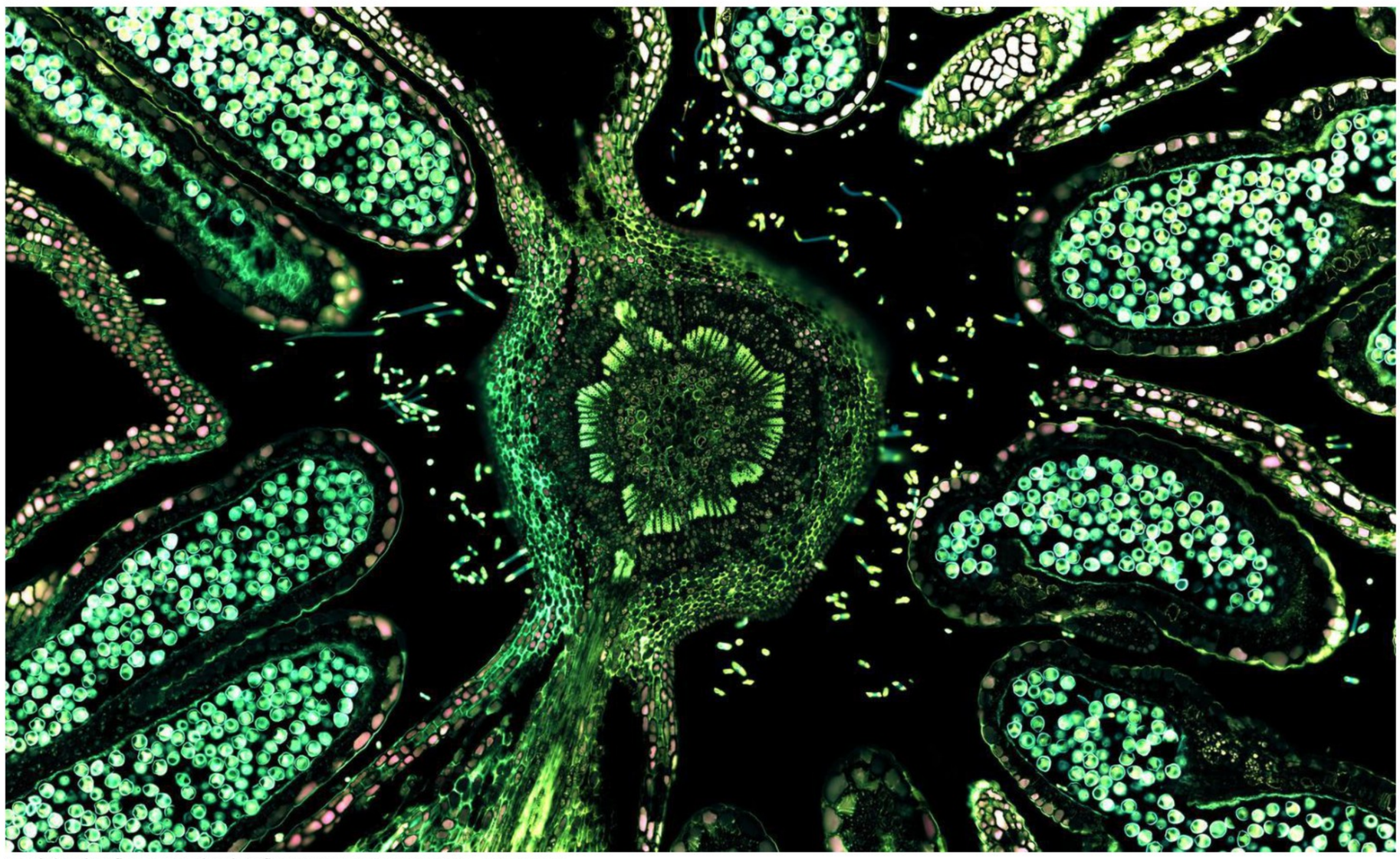


A male hazelnut flower viewed under a fluorescence microscope. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Scientists devise 'glowscope' to bring fluorescent microscopy to schools

Researchers from the Winona State University say a rudimentary fluorescence microscope can cost around $30-$50 (₹2,500-₹4,100) and many individuals may not be able to afford this; students in resource-poor labs can use foldscopes and glowscopes to study the microscopic world

Vasudevan Mukunth

The story so far:

In 2014, a group of scientists at the Stanford University released Foldscope, a handheld microscope made almost entirely out of paper, which takes 30 minutes to put together, and which could capture images of cells. So far, millions of people – especially schoolchildren – around the world have taken images of the microscopic world with Foldscopes, while dozens of scientific studies have been conducted with the help of this instrument. Its cost? ₹400. Foldscope democratised the world's access to optical microscopy. Now, researchers at the Winona State University, Minnesota, have created a design for a 'glowscope', a device that could democratise access to fluorescence microscopy – at least partly so.

What is fluorescence microscopy?

An optical microscope views an object by studying how it absorbs, reflects or scatters visible light. A fluorescence microscope views an object by studying how it re-emits light that it has absorbed, i.e. how it fluoresces. This is its basic principle.

The object is illuminated with light of a specific wavelength. Particles in the object absorb this light and re-emit it at a higher wavelength (i.e. different colour). These particles are called fluorophores; the object is infused with them before being placed under the microscope.

There are versions of fluorescent microscopes with more sophisticated abilities, such as epifluorescence and confocal laser-scanning microscopes.

When the fluorophores fluoresce, a fluorescent microscope can track them as they move inside the object, revealing the object's internal shape and other characteristics. For example, a fluorophore called the Hoechst stain binds to the DNA and is excited by ultraviolet light. So, a tissue sample collected from a person could be injected with the Hoechst stain and placed under a fluorescent microscope. When the sample is illuminated by ultraviolet light, the stain absorbs the light and re-emits it at a higher wavelength. The microscope will point out where this is happening: in the nuclei of cells, where DNA is located. This way, the nuclei in the tissue can be labelled for further study.

Scientists have developed different fluorophores to identify and study different entities, from specific parts of the DNA to protein complexes. On the flip side, fluorescence microscopes cost at least a lakh rupee, but often up to crores.

How does the new device improve access?

In the new study, researchers from the Winona State University have described a rudimentary fluorescence microscope that they say can be put together at a cost of $30-$50 (₹2,500-₹4,100). Many individuals in India may not be able to afford this, but schools and colleges can.

The scientists wrote in their paper: "We demonstrate the ability of these devices... to detect green and red fluorophores and to monitor and detect changes to heart rate and rhythmicity in embryonic zebrafish."

Their set-up consists of two plexiglass surfaces, an LED flashlight, three theatre stage-lighting filters, a clip-on macro lens, and a smartphone. The smartphone (with the lens attached) is placed on one surface that is suspended at a height (say, a foot above). The second sheet is placed below and holds the object.

In their study, the objects were zebrafish embryos in a petri dish, prepared according to well-established guidelines to ensure they aren't harmed. They were injected with different fluorophores depending on which part of the embryos were of interest. The sources of illumination were also LED flashlights emitting light of correspondingly different wavelengths.

One of the stage-lighting filters was held between the flashlight and the object and the other two were held between the object and the smartphone. The role of these filters was to ensure that light of the right frequency reached the object and that fluoresced light of a suitable frequency reached the camera.

What did they observe?

With this setup, the researchers were able to image the creatures' brain, spinal cord (using a fluorophore called DsRed), heart (mCherry), and head and jaw bones (mRFP). They were able to zoom in and out using the smartphone camera and the clip-on lens, and by adjusting the distance between the sample and the smartphone platforms.

They estimated the total cost of the set-up used to obtain these images to be $30-$50: $5-$10 for the "scope frame", composed of "plexiglass, wood, nuts, bolts, washers, paper clamps"; $10-$15 for the clip-on macro lens; $3-$5 for an LED lamp to generally illuminate the apparatus and $10-$20 for the LED flashlight to illuminate the fluorophores; and less than $1 for the filters.

Is the 'glowscope' truly accessible?

It's one thing to set up a fluorescence microscope using products purchased on online marketplaces; actually obtaining all of the materials required is another. Using a 'glowscope' still requires access to fluorophores, suitable biological samples, the know-how to combine the two, and some knowledge of physics to work out which LED flashlight to buy.

The foldscope was truly remarkable because all its required components were simple to understand; preparing a sample for viewing was as simple as placing, say, a cloth fibre on a piece of paper and inserted that in front of the lens; and using a foldscope was as simple as focusing its lens on the object. The 'glowscope' is not so simple.

However, the fact that a simple fluorescent microscope can be set up with a few thousand rupees means, instead of being entirely out of reach, researchers can prepare samples and take them to schools, where students can observe them.

Students as well as researchers in resource-poor labs can also use foldscopes and 'glowscopes' together to learn more about the microscopic world.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

On this date 10 years ago, the current Pope, the head of the worldwide Catholic Church, was elected. A quiz on the election process that chooses the new Pontiff

V.V. Ramanan

QUESTION 1
Which word associated with the election of the Pope has its origin in the Latin term meaning 'locked up with key' as traditionally the cardinals were locked up inside the Sistine Chapel?

QUESTION 2
Though there are more than 200 Cardinals, what is the upper age limit to be eligible to take part in the voting and what is the maximum number of cardinal electors?

QUESTION 3
Nowadays, a chemical compound is used to create the smoke used to announce the election of a new Pope. What was traditionally used to burn along with the ballot papers?

QUESTION 4
Once an elected cardinal gives his assent to the election, what is the first act he does as per the request of the Dean Cardinal?

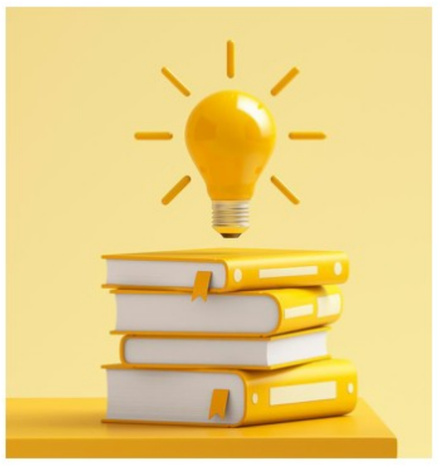
QUESTION 5
Traditionally, the new Pope will not assume a particular name because of two reasons. Which is the name and what are the reasons?

QUESTION 6
What is 'Habemus Papam'?

QUESTION 7
After the newly-elected pontiff makes his first public appearance, what is the traditional blessing he gives that marks the beginning of the new pontificate?

Visual question:
What was his pre-Papal name and from which country does he come ? AFP

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. What are the five M's of advertising? **Ans: Mission, Money, Message, Media, Measurement**
2. Which Indian ad agency created the iconic 'Lalitaji' ad for Surf Excel in the 1980s? **Ans: Lintas (Now Mullen Lowe Lintas Group)**
3. Which Indian brand's advertising campaign featured the tagline 'Fill it. Shut it. Forget it'? **Ans: Hero Honda**
4. Which brand's advertising campaign featured the tagline 'The Complete Man'? **Ans: Raymond's**
5. Which cold drink brand carries the tag line 'Taste The Thunder'? **Ans: Thums Up**
Visual question: Identify the brand. **Ans: Air India**
Early Birds: K.N. Viswanathan | Vinay Chandra | Abeer Goel



KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Now for God's sake, will you please chillax?

People dealing with the security of high-profile individuals are schooled to spot potential danger

S. Upendran

"The party is going to start in an hour. You're not even dressed. How can you sit there..."

"I have plenty of time for that. Now, will you please let me finish..."

"What about the caterer? She's not here. What if..."

"She'll be here in half an hour. Now for God's sake, will you please chillax?"

"Chillax? What does it mean?"

"It's a combination of two words – 'chill' and 'relax'. When you 'chillax', you become very calm and relaxed. You stop worrying about things."

"In other words, you stop being nervous about something. That's what I need to do now – chillax."

"Exactly! By the way, the word is pronounced 'chi-LAX'. The stress is on the second syllable. It's a word that's mostly used in informal contexts. When I noticed that Ravi was extremely nervous before the interview, I told him to chillax."

"That's what we should tell ourselves when driving in this crazy city of ours. We should take a deep breath and tell ourselves to chillax."

"I doubt if it'll help, though! There are certain situations when you just can't chillax!"

"Like what happened to you at the office yesterday?"

"Office? What are you talking about?"

"Sujatha told me about the big argument that you and Ramesh had yesterday. What was it about?"

"News gets around, doesn't it? How did Sujatha come to know about it?"

"I didn't ask her. So, tell me what happened?"

"I'd requested Ramesh several times not to park his office files on my desk. But he..."

"Park his files? What are you talking about it? How can anyone park their files?"

"When you 'park' an object somewhere, you leave it there temporarily."

"And in the process, you end up annoying a few people!"

"I guess you could say that! Though, not always. Whenever I park my backpack on the sofa, my mother doesn't like it. She asks me to park it in the cupboard."

"My grandfather doesn't like to see anything parked on his favourite rocking chair."

"That's a good example. The word can also be used to suggest that the object has been left there for a considerable period of time. When the parents were away, the two kids parked themselves in front of the computer and played video games all day."

upendrankye@gmail.com

Word of the day

Objurgate:
rebuke severely; scold

Synonyms: reprimand, castigate, reproach

Usage: *The mother objurgated her son for his tantrums.*

Pronunciation: https://bit.ly/3Fir1sT

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˈɒbdʒəgeɪt/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

Minor killed in accident

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 17-year-old boy was killed when he lost control of the scooter he was riding and rammed into the divider on Goods Shed Road on Saturday night. The deceased, Danish, a resident of Bakshi Garden, was on his way to a hotel to get food for guests at his house. Passersby rushed Danish to Victoria Hospital, where the doctor declared him as brought dead.

Timings
BENGALURU

MONDAY, MAR. 13	
RISE 06:29	SET 18:30
RISE 23:34	SET 10:19
TUESDAY, MAR. 14	
RISE 06:28	SET 18:30
RISE 00:00	SET 11:10
WEDNESDAY, MAR. 15	
RISE 06:27	SET 18:30
RISE 00:34	SET 12:06

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	33	22
Mysuru	33	17
Bengaluru	33	17

Bengaluru Today
31°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be slight cool with mist and haze. Day will be slight warm. Night also will be pleasant but hazy.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
32°C A dry weather to continue. Day will be little warm. Night will be slight cool with haze and mist.

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THE HINDU
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Multiple ticket aspirants from same party begin campaign in constituencies across city

For instance, in Byatarayanapura constituency, represented by Krishna Byre Gowda of the Congress since 2008, four BJP ticket aspirants have launched individual campaigns, visiting door to door to meet voters and organising several events

K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj
BENGALURU

Congress ticket aspirant from Rajajinagar constituency Raghuveer S. Gowda reaching out to street vendors with umbrellas, and (right) an autorickshaw being used to campaign for H. Ravindra, BJP ticket aspirant in Vijayanagar Assembly segment. PTI AND BHAGYA PRAKASH K.

Multiple Assembly election ticket aspirants from the same party have launched rival campaigns in the same constituencies across the city, creating factionalism and chaos within parties and confusion among voters, party insiders have said.

Given that this seems to be the situation in Opposition parties against incumbent MLAs, it has only strengthened the position of the incumbents and made their road to victory a bit easy in the city, political parties said.

For instance, in Byatarayanapura constituency, represented by Krishna Byre Gowda of the Congress, since 2008, four aspirants for BJP ticket – the former councillor Muneendra Kumar, defeated BJP candidate A. Ravi, Chakrapani, and Thammesh Gowda – have launched individual campaigns, visiting door to door to meet voters and organising several events.

The same is the case with the Congress in Chickpet constituency, represented by BJP's Uday Garudachar. At least three candidates, the former MLA from the constituency R.V. Devaraj, the former Mayor Gangambike Mallikarjun, and MLC P.R. Ramesh, have all begun their campaign.

Karnataka Votes 2023

All aspirants who have begun campaigning that *The Hindu* spoke to expressed confidence that they would get the ticket, often offered arguments to run down rival aspirants from their parties, even as they made the mandatory statement that all of them would work together on behalf of whoever gets the ticket. Mr. Thammesh Gowda said all four aspirants in Byatarayanapura were together and determined to win the constituency this time.

"The party is keen to bring fresh faces and asked me to work in Vijayanagar. I am hopeful of the ticket this time," said the former councillor Umesh Shetty from Vijayanagar where H. Ravindra, another former councillor from the party, has launched a campaign too on behalf of the BJP.

Campaigning for party'

Ms. Mallikarjun said she was only campaigning for the party and was hoping for the ticket. Another former mayor Padmavathi, an aspirant from Rajajinagar, said she hoped the party would give her the ticket.

Manohar, one of the general secretaries of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC), resigned from his post recently in protest over his name being sidelined for the ticket in Rajajinagar.

This seems to be the scenario in most of the 28 constituencies across the city, with incumbent MLAs across parties leading high-pitched campaigns for their re-election.

"These rival campaigns by aspirants of the same party against incumbents will only end up helping the incumbent MLAs to strengthen their position. Rarely will we find these aspirants now running these rival campaigns really join hands after one of them gets the ticket, though all of them will say so now. This has also created confusion among the people as to who is the face of the party in such constituencies," said Ramalinga Reddy, KPCC working president, Bengaluru division, and a senior MLA from the city.

N.R. Ramesh, president, BJP - Bengaluru South, and a ticket aspirant from Jayanagar, said given that the party would announce ticket only a few days after the elections were notified, the party had directed aspirants to campaign, but under strict guidelines to not declare themselves as candidates. "In fact, we served notices to three aspirants in Anekal, Vijayanagar, and BTM Layout for claiming to be party's candidates during the campaign," he said.

The aspirants have been tasked to distribute handbills of the achievements of the Union and State governments and scams during the former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's tenure in the State.

From Page One

Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway inaugurated

Addressing the gathering at Gejjalagere, Mr. Modi emphasised the need for a 'double-engine' government in Karnataka if the State were to make rapid progress.

He said infrastructure projects like highways will not only provide facilities for transport and connectivity, but also attract investment, generate employment and create sources of income. During the last few years, more than ₹1 lakh crore had been spent on infrastructure projects like construction of highways in Karnataka, he said.

The access-controlled highway between Bengaluru and Mysuru will more than halve the travel time between the two cities and bring about economic development in the region, Mr. Modi said while adding that the Mysuru-Kushalnagar highway will also improve connectivity and promote industrial development.

Mr. Modi said Karnataka was leading the country in attracting foreign investment and claimed that the ₹4 lakh investment the State had drawn after COVID-19 pandemic was on account of the efforts of the 'double engine' government.

Apart from Information Technology (IT), Karnataka was making rapid strides in the fields of biotechnology, defence and manufacturing. While attracting a lot of investment in the areas of defence, aerospace and space sector, Karnataka was achieving progress in the field of electric vehicle manufacturing, the Prime Minister said.

He also took a dig at the Congress and said its leaders were busy "digging Modi's grave" at a time when the 'double-engine' government was working for the welfare of the people. "While Mr. Modi was building the expressway and making the lives of poor easy, the Congress was busy digging Modi's grave", he remarked.

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Pralhad Joshi, Minister for Excise K. Gopalaiah and Minister for Youth Empowerment and Sports K.C. Narayana Gowda, besides Sumalatha Ambareesh and Pratap Simha, MPs, were also present on the occasion.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Modi arrived in Mysuru by special aircraft and boarded a helicopter to Mandya, where he was received by Mr. Bommai.

After the roadshow in Mandya and the symbolic walk on the highway at Hanakere, Mr. Modi visited an exhibition of the expressway project before proceeding to the public meeting.

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INBRIEF

Convention of backward classes tomorrow

Ahead of elections, a convention to create political awareness among the backward and most backward communities has been organised on Tuesday in which Congress leaders are expected to participate. "Because these communities are not united in seeking government facilities, BJP and JD(S) are using them as vote bank," Congress MLC P.R. Ramesh told presspersons here on Sunday.

Agri Unifest to begin today on UAS-B's GKVK campus

The 21st All-India Inter-Agricultural Universities Youth Festival 2022-23 (Agri Unifest - 2023) will be held on University of Agricultural Sciences-Bengaluru's GKVK campus from March 13 to 17. The students from 57 agricultural universities of the country are taking part in the festival, which will begin with a procession on Monday.

Various events, including light vocal, one act play, mime, on-the-spot painting, cartooning, extempore and quiz will be held.

Roadside amenities to come up at 23 places along national highways in State

Gadkari says provision will be made for heliport, droneport, fuel stations, restaurants, washrooms, and stalls for handicrafts, silk, furniture and so on

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

The Centre is planning roadside amenities with provision for heliport, droneport, fuel stations, restaurants, washrooms, and stalls at 23 places along the national highways in Karnataka.

Addressing the gathering at a public meeting organised in connection with the inauguration of the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway at Gejjalagere in Mandya near here on Sunday, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said the roadside amenities will also feature stalls for handicrafts, handloom, silk, wooden carving, furniture, honey, sandalwood soaps, besides parking place and restaurants.

On the occasion, Mr. Gadkari also recalled similar efforts made by the government to promote wooden toys when he was the Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Ministers Pralhad Joshi and Nitin Gadkari, and Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai at the foundation stone laying and development projects dedication ceremony in Mandya on Sunday. ANI

With regard to the proposed four-lane highway between Mysuru and Kushalnagar, whose foundation stone was laid on Sunday, Mr. Gadkari said the 92-km-long highway can also be a link to port connectivity by emerging as an alternative route between Bengaluru and Mangaluru.

In view of the problems faced during the journey through the ghat region in the existing Bengaluru-Mangaluru road, much traffic is diverted to Tuticorin port in Tamil Nadu. This Mysuru-Kushalnagar route, if developed into a four-lane highway, can be an alternative to reach Mangaluru port, he said.

Besides, the highway, which is being developed at a cost of ₹4,130 crore, will help people travelling to Kodagu, which is among the leading hill stations in the country.

He said the Bengaluru-Chennai expressway will be part of the Surat-Chennai expressway connecting Kashmir to Kanyakumari along with Trivandrum and Kochi. While the Bengaluru-Chennai stretch of the expressway is scheduled for completion by March 2024, the work on Surat-Chennai expressway is almost half complete, he claimed.

He also hoped that the work on the Ring Road in Bengaluru will be completed by March next year and relieve the motorists of Bengaluru of the frequent traffic snarls they encountered.

The 118-km-long Bengaluru-Mysuru expressway, which was dedicated to the nation by the Prime Minister on Sunday, comprised of 52 km of greenfield highway and 8 km of elevated road, he said adding that a total of ₹4,000 crore had been given as compensation to the farmers for land acquisition.

89 underpasses

Also, he said that there were only 24 underpasses in the original plan, but due to demands from local representatives and MPs, the total number of underpasses had increased to 89.

He said the expressway, which was part of National Highway 275, would be connecting to national highways in neighbouring Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

CM slams Opposition for claiming credit for project

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai has attributed the conception and completion of the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway to the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and took potshots at the Congress for claiming credit for it.

He was speaking at Mandya on Sunday where Mr. Modi inaugurated the expressway project and dedicated it to the nation.

In his speech, Mr. Bommai said that though there was talk of highway development between the two cities since the 1990s, it never took off but the present project gathered pace only after Mr. Modi became the Prime Minister in 2014.

His remarks came in the backdrop of both the Congress and the Janata Dal (Secular) claiming credit for the expressway project by stating that they prepared the groundwork for it. Congress had also released documents to back its claims that the works were approved when Siddaramaiah was the Chief Minister of the State and H.C. Mahadevappa was the Public Works Minister.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurating the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway and other development projects in Mandya district on Sunday; (right) Sumalatha, Mandya MP, greeting the Prime Minister. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

But, Mr. Bommai said the preparation of the DPR, land acquisition, transfer of State highway to NH, release of additional funds took place after Mr. Modi became the PM.

"The works commenced in 2019 when Mr. Modi was the Prime Minister and is now being inaugurated in 2023 by Mr. Modi himself as the PM," he said.

Without naming any political party, Mr. Bommai said that some people are claiming credit for the expressway project and it was being discussed all over the social media and the mainstream media. But people of the region know as to who was at the helm of affairs when the work was taken up and completed, he added.

The expressway which has been completed at a cost of ₹8,480 crore will not only reduce the travel time between Bengaluru and Mysuru from 3 hours to about 75 minutes, but is reckoned to be a major economic booster to Mysuru and Mandya region.

Congress criticises BJP for allowing rowdy to greet PM

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Weeks after the BJP and Congress traded barbs over rowdy sheeters being inducted into the BJP, the Congress on Sunday tweeted a photograph of 'Fighter' Ravi, a rowdy sheeter, seen greeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Congress said: "There is no other party in the world that is so shameless like BJP. Prime Minister wishing Fighter Ravi with folded hands has brought disrepute to the post. It is shameless that BJP which has said it will not take a rowdy into the party, has brought a rowdy sheeter before the Prime Minister." The BJP is yet to respond to the Congress's allegations. Congress sources said that the photo was taken in Mandya on Sunday, and had been shared with the party.

The Prime Minister with 'Fighter' Ravi, a rowdy sheeter. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A few weeks earlier, a war of words had broken between Congress and BJP after MP Tejaswi Surya and BJP's Chickpet MLA Uday Garudachar shared stage with rowdy sheeter 'Silent' Sunil in Bengaluru.

Expressway won't help people living in towns along the road: HDK

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Stating that the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway, which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday, will not benefit people living in the towns and villages along the road including Mandya, former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy said that it benefits only those zipping on the highway.

"Is the road beneficial to people of Ramanagara, Channapatna, Maddur and Srirangapatna? The truth is no. The highway is a death knell to people of Mandya and its economy. More than 2,600 small and medium businesses, including hotels, petrol pumps and jaggery units will be hit, affecting livelihood of about 6,000 families. What is the alternative to these affected families?," Mr. Kumaraswamy tweeted.

While the old highway was a lifeline for lakhs of people in Mandya and Ramanagara districts, the new expressway will benefit a few, and that it has become an ATM for BJP leaders, he added.

Mr. Kumaraswamy said that people living along the highway will now have to travel 10 km to 25 km more to reach their villages. "Should they struggle to reach their homes for having parted with their land for the highway?" he asked.

He asked: "Why were two-wheelers kept away from the highway? Why two lanes could not be earmarked for two-wheelers? This is not charity but right of the people." The truth is that the expressway has not been funded by the BJP government at the Centre, and that for the next 30 years people who use the road will fund its construction cost, he said.

Controversial arch removed

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

A controversial arch named after Uri Gowda and Dodda Nanje Gowda - purported to have killed Tipu Sultan - and erected along the route of Prime Minister's road show in Mandya was dismantled after protest on Saturday.

The BJP had installed four arches of which one was named as Uri Gowda and Dodda Nanje Gowda Mahadwara. This riled a section of the public on the grounds that it was an insult to the sensibilities of the general public. The two characters were introduced in a play penned by former Director of Rangayana Addanda C. Cariappa in which they are depicted as responsible for the death of the Mysuru ruler.

CORRIDORS OF POWER

Two approaches to 'gifts'

Ahead of the Legislative Assembly election in Karnataka, MLAs and ticket aspirants have begun wooing voters by offering them gifts. But interestingly, in some places, they have had to face the wrath of voters. Recently, a few people, identifying themselves as supporters of BJP MLA C.T. Ravi, visited villages in Chikkamagaluru constituency to distribute sarees. They were stopped by a few angry voters, who wanted to know why the MLA was offering gifts now, while he had not bothered to respond to their needs during COVID-19 lockdown. A couple of them even went to the extent of burning the sarees.

However, in Hassan, the scene was completely different. In the name of Ashta Laxmi Pooja, BJP MLA Preetham Gowda's supporters invited women and offered them bagina. Each received a saree and a silver-plated photo of goddess Laxmi. Hundreds of women took part in the prayers conducted under the guidance of a priest. The MLA and his supporters are organising the event under the banner of a trust in 35 different locations in Hassan constituency.

Banking on BSY

The BJP appears to be banking on its veteran leader and Lingayat strongman B.S. Yediyurappa more than any other leader in Karnataka to get votes in the ensuing elections to the Legislative Assembly, though he is only a member of the newly constituted campaign committee. During their frequent visits, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several Central Ministers have praised Mr. Yediyurappa and mentioned Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai as part of the ceremonial gesture of recognising his presence on the stage. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in Belagavi claimed that BJP had not unseated Mr. Yediyurappa from Chief Ministerial post, but that he had quit himself, owing to health issues. Union Home Minister Amit Shah too in a rally Sandur, kept on referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mr. Yediyurappa as the party's tall leaders. Mr. Modi, who heaped praises on Mr. Yediyurappa in his rallies in Shivamogga and Belagavi, hardly made a mention of Mr. Bommai. What do such remarks mean? Does it mean that only Mr. Yediyurappa, the veteran campaigner, is best suited to seek votes, compared to Mr. Bommai who is seen more as an administrator?

City buses wait for none

The private city bus operators in Mangaluru are known to be sticklers for time and the BJP realised it the hard way during the recent meeting of women party activists held in the city.

The meeting was arranged by Mangaluru City South

MLA D. Vedavyas Kamath. He had called former TV news anchor and BJP MLC Tejaswini Gowda to give a pep talk to the activists. The women activists came from different parts of the city in the city buses hired by the party. The venue located in the heart of the city was filled with activists by 4 p.m. and Mr. Kamath presented each of the activists with a set of bangles. The programme started at 5 p.m. following the arrival of Ms. Gowda. It was around 6 p.m. that Mr. Gowda started to speak.

Around 7 p.m. when the speech was on, a steady stream of activists started to leave the venue, as they were getting calls asking them to get into the buses lined up outside the venue. As the first bus left, more activists started to leave the venue fearing that they would eventually be left with no transport. In desperation, organisers tried to close the main door of the hall, but had to relent because of the pressure from activists. Only a handful of party activists were in the venue as Ms. Gowda's long speech came to an end around 7.30 p.m.

Sathish G.T.
Rishikesh Bahadur Desai
Raghava M.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

SUNDARARAJAN R, (Sundhu) 91 yrs, SAO (Retd) AG's Office Chennai attained Acharyan Thiruvadi on 11th March 2023 at Bengaluru.Bereaved by family and friends.Contact S.Madhavan B 801, Purva West End, Service Road, Kudlu Gate, Bengaluru 560068. Ph: 09986763834.

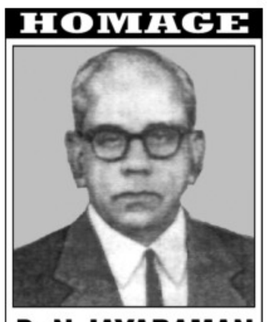
DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

THIRD ANNIVERSARY

Major (Dr.) K. Mathews
22.11.1933 - 13.03.2020
"Sadly missed along life's way, quietly remembered every day. No longer in our life to share, but in our hearts, you're always there."
Fondly remembered by
FAMILY MEMBERS
Mobile: 98412 65336

HOMAGE

HOMAGE



Dr.N.JAYARAMAN
22.02.1911 TO 13.03.1971
OUR FOUNDER
ESSEN & CO.
Analytical Chemists & Assayers
INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH CORPORATION
Manufacturers of
Brit®
Stationery Products

EPS booked for 'assaulting' air passenger in Madurai

The complainant, who is a functionary of the Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam, had raised slogans against the AIADMK leader at the airport and livestreamed it on social media; Rajeshwaran called Palaniswami a 'symbol of betrayal'

The Hindu Bureau
MADURAI

Leader of the Opposition and former Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, AIADMK MLA P.R. Senthilnathan, former Minister M. Manikandan and three others have been booked by the Madurai city police on the charge of "abusing and assaulting" an air passenger at the airport here on Saturday.

On a counter-complaint filed by AIADMK leader R.B. Udhayakumar, the Avaniyapuram police have registered a case of abuse and wrongful restraint against Rajeshwaran, a functionary of the Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam, headed by T.T.V. Dhinakaran, who had travelled on the same flight from Chennai as Mr. Palaniswami.

Former Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami was on his way to Sivaganga to address a public meeting. FILE PHOTO

The police said that while Mr. Palaniswami, along with his personal security officer Krishnan, was travelling on a bus after getting down from the aircraft towards the arrival hall of the airport terminal, Mr. Rajeshwaran raised slogans against the AIADMK interim general secretary.

Video goes viral
After switching on his mobile phone camera and live streaming the slogan-shouting on a social media platform, Mr. Rajeshwaran called Mr. Palaniswami a "symbol of betrayal". In the clip that was shared widely on the social media, Mr. Rajeshwaran is heard criticising Mr. Palaniswami, who is seen standing in the bus, for having "betrayed" former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa's close aide V.K. Sasikala.

Accusation
He also accused Mr. Palaniswami of having given the 10.5% internal reservation to the Vanniyars "against the welfare of the Most Backward Classes" in southern districts.

The clip also shows Mr. Krishnan attempting to snatch Mr. Rajeshwaran's phone.

Mr. Palaniswami, who was on his way to Sivaganga to address a public meeting, was received by a large number of AIADMK workers at the airport.

The complainant claimed he was assaulted when the bus reached the terminal.

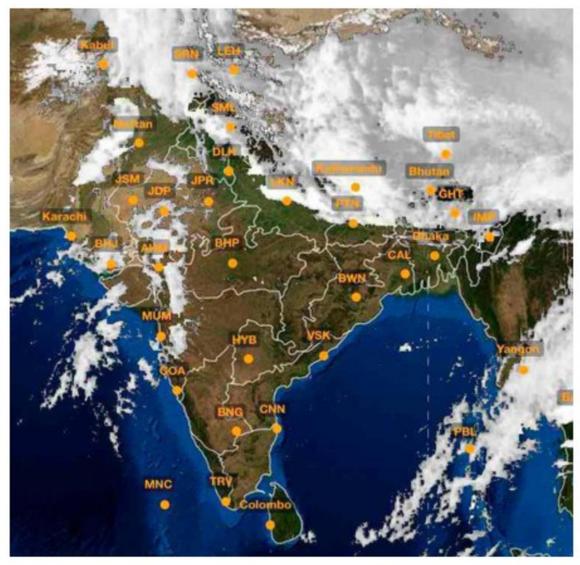
Besides Mr. Palaniswami, Mr. Senthilnathan and Mr. Manikandan, the Avaniyapuram police had booked Mr. Krishnan and two others for wrongful restraint, abuse and assault and for snatching Mr. Rajeshwaran's mobile phone.

Vasan condemns action
Tamil Maanila Congress (TMC) president G.K. Vasan on Sunday strongly condemned the filing of the police case against Mr. Palaniswami and the others.

In a statement, he pointed out that instead of investigating the AMMK functionary and bringing out the truth, filing a case against Edappadi K. Palaniswami was not justified, and added that the action was due to political vendetta.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning and hail likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand; with lightning over Sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Maharashtra and Marathwada.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	34.0	17.6	Kozhikode	—	35.5	25.4
Ahmedabad	—	37.3	19.0	Kurnool	—	37.9	21.7
Aizawl	—	33.5	11.6	Lucknow	—	33.0	17.9
Allahabad	—	34.6	16.4	Madurai	—	36.0	23.1
Bengaluru	—	32.5	17.4	Mangaluru	—	34.7	22.4
Bhopal	—	—	17.4	Mumbai	—	35.8	24.8
Bhubaneswar	—	35.6	21.0	Mysuru	—	33.1	16.9
Chandigarh	—	30.1	15.9	New Delhi	—	34.2	14.6
Chennai	—	33.1	24.0	Patna	—	—	17.9
Coimbatore	—	34.4	22.2	Port Blair	—	32.0	24.2
Dehradun	—	29.9	15.6	Puducherry	—	33.0	20.5
Gangtok	2.0	20.6	10.5	Pune	—	34.5	10.3
Goa	—	36.0	22.2	Raipur	—	36.0	16.5
Guwahati	—	35.2	16.0	Ranchi	—	31.8	18.0
Hubballi	—	34.0	21.0	Shillong	—	22.1	12.5
Hyderabad	—	33.8	21.6	Shimla	—	19.6	10.2
Imphal	—	32.1	13.4	Srinagar	—	22.6	4.2
Jaipur	—	33.2	17.8	Thiruvananthapuram	—	34.1	24.7
Kochi	—	33.0	26.0	Tiruchi	—	34.9	22.4
Kohima	—	22.2	10.8	Vijayawada	—	34.3	22.2
Kolkata	—	33.8	21.8	Visakhapatnam	—	33.0	23.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	..—	..—	.10	...242	...189	
Bengaluru	.04	..39	.33	76	94	
Chennai	.28	..29	.61	...119	94	
Delhi	.25	..87	.26	...312	...221	
Hyderabad	.08	..02	.34	...132	...128	
Kolkata	.15	..50	.24	...193	...113	
Lucknow	.28	..66	.35	...243	...141	
Mumbai	.86	275	103	...153	...146	
Pune	101	136	114	...228	...138	
Visakhapatnam	..—	..—	.48	.....—	.....—	

Yesterday
In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Byrnihat, Meghalaya recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 360 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Damoh, Madhya Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 27

Air Quality Code: Poor | Moderate | Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Telangana CM treated for stomach ulcer, discharged

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao visited the Asian Institute of Gastroenterology in Gachibowli after he developed abdominal discomfort on Sunday morning.

A CT scan and an endoscopy revealed a small ulcer in his stomach. This was managed medically, said hospital chairman D. Nageshwar Reddy in a release. All other parameters were normal, it said. Mr. Rao returned to his official residence in the evening.

LDF, UDF are not capable of developing Kerala, says Shah

The Hindu Bureau
THRISSUR

Launching the campaign for the 2024 Lok Sabha election in Thrissur on Sunday, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) would not be able to lead Kerala to development.

Mr. Shah's Kerala visit gains importance against the backdrop of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent statement that as in the north-eastern States, the BJP will come into power in Kerala too.

Poll bugle: Union Home Minister Amit Shah at a meeting organised at the Thekkinkadu maidan in Thrissur on Sunday. K.K. NAJEEB

Addressing a public meeting, he unleashed criticism against the ruling LDF for its failure to control the fire at the Brahmapuram waste management plant in Kochi.

"How can a government that failed to handle a fire at a dumpyard even after 11 days since it broke out, handle the development of the State. They [the LDF and the UDF]have pushed the State into a debt trap of ₹3,40,000 crore," Mr. Shah said.

Mobile medical units in Kochi from today

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

A medical officer, nursing officer, nursing assistant and stabilisation arrangements will be available

Kerala Health Minister Veena George has said that mobile health units will be pressed into service from Monday in Kochi against the backdrop of the fire in the waste dumping yard at Brahmapuram.

There will be two mobile units on Monday and five from Tuesday, said a communication.

Field level coverage
The mobile units are being deployed to identify respiratory problems and make emergency care available at the field level. The mobile units will refer those affected to hospitals.

The services of the mobile units will be available in places identified on the basis of field data. There will be a medical officer, nursing officer and nursing assistant in the mobile units. Stabilisation arrangements and facilities for nebulisation will be available with these units.

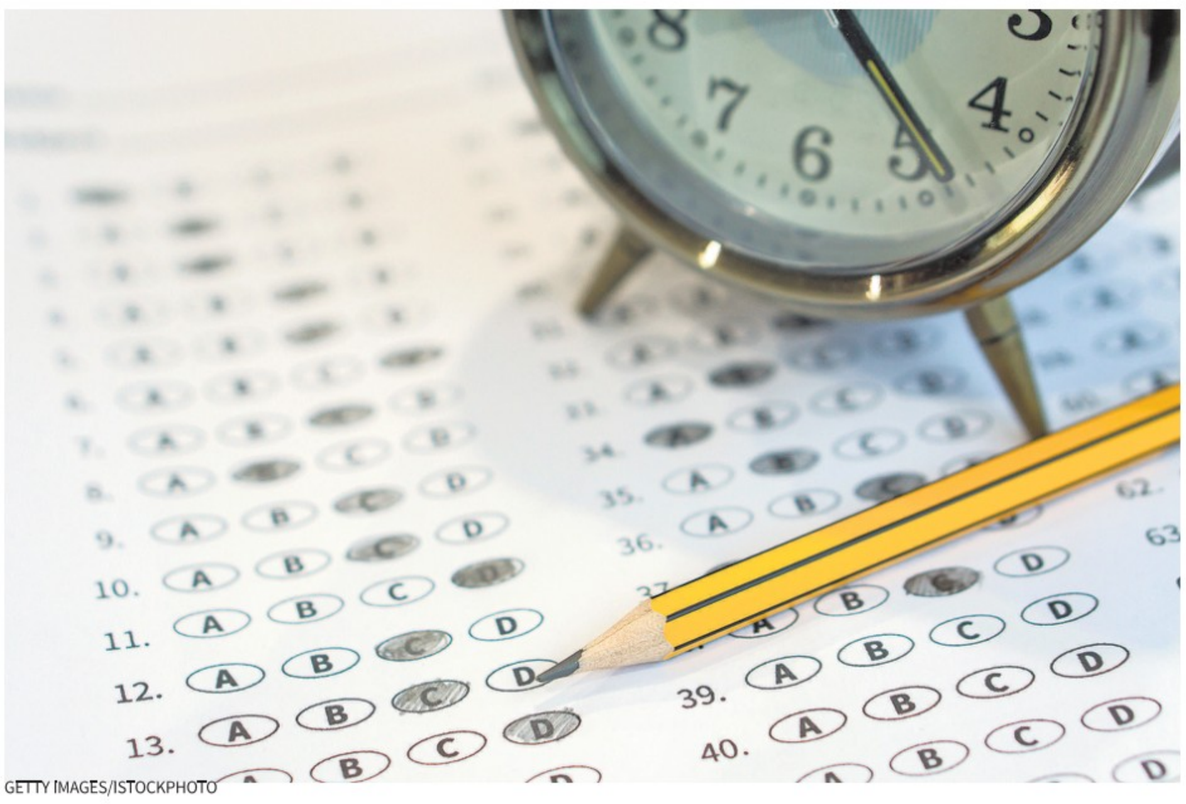
THE HINDU

EDUCATIONPLUS

GET THE EDGE Follow us facebook.com/thehindu twitter.com/the_hindu instagram.com/the_hindu

P.V. Navaneethakrishnan

A recent report by the University Grants Commission (UGC) showed that India has 1,113 universities and 43,796 higher education institutions (HEIs). Of these, it is mandatory for the central universities to use the Common University Entrance Test (CUET-UG) for admissions to undergraduate programmes. Many other institutions are also using the CUET-UG for this purpose and it is estimated that around 15 lakh candidates will take the exam. While the efforts of the National Testing Agency (NTA) in improving the system for 2023 after taking feedback from students, teachers and parents is laudable, a few refinements may still be considered.


GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Make the right choice

While the changes made in the CUET-UG 2023 are laudable, a few refinements could help further

Computational subjects
Section II of the question paper consists of 45/50 domain-specific objective questions in each of the 27 subjects starting with Accountancy and ending in Teaching Aptitude, with 45 minutes for each subject. The time taken to answer MCQs varies according to the subject. Maths, Accountancy and other subjects that involve problem-solving will require more time than those where one can answer questions even as the paper is read. Thus, the decision to give 15 to 20 minutes more to subjects involving calculations is justified. I would like to offer the example of the Tamil Nadu Professional Courses Entrance Exam (TNPCEE). When it was in vogue, there were only 90 questions in the Maths paper compared to 120 questions in the others. Perhaps this could be deemed a better way.

The move to increase the maximum number of subjects that can be taken from all three sections to 10 is welcome, as is the use of percentile ranking for merger and normalisation.

Negative marking
The decision to award five marks to a correct answer and minus one to a wrong answer needs to be considered. Logically, if each question carries k answer choices, then the negative mark for a wrong answer should be –n/(k–1), where n is the mark awarded for a correct answer. Suppose a 100-mark question paper has 100 questions, each carrying four answer choices (n=1, k=4). Say, a candidate chooses to mark C as the answer for all the questions. Probability-wise, C will be the correct choice for 25 questions. Therefore, he/she will get 25 marks. To nullify this, the remaining 75 wrong answers must be awarded –1/3 mark each. In CUET-UG, n=5 and k= 4; hence –1.66 is the negative mark to be awarded to a wrong answer, as against the currently proposed minus one. If only one mark is deducted for a wrong answer, the candidate will score 25x5 – 75x1 = 50 (assuming 100 to be the number of questions), whereas a better but sincere student may get a lower mark, which may be even be negative.

The time taken to answer MCQs varies according to the subject. Maths, Accountancy and other subjects that involve problem-solving will require more time than those where one can answer questions even as the paper is read.

Wrong questions
Further, for questions that do not have a correct answer or have more than one correct answer, full marks will be awarded to only those who have "attempted" such questions. What if a candidate realises that the question is wrong and skips it, rather than mark a random answer from the options? He/she cannot be penalised for being smart. What can be done is to either drop the question from consideration while correcting or give all candidates the full marks for the question, instead of only those who attempt the question. Further, if there is a printing error or a faulty translation, only the English version will be considered as valid. But how will a candidate know this and that he/she has to look at the English version? Such questions can also be considered as wrong and the candidates given the full marks.

The writer is Former Professor and Director, Entrance Exams and Admission, Anna University, Chennai.

SCHOLARSHIPS

HDFC Bank Parivartan's ECS Scholarship
HDFC Bank aims to support meritorious and needy students belonging to underprivileged sections of society.
Eligibility: Open to students who are Indian nationals and studying in school (Class 1 to 12) or doing UG, PG (professional and non-professional) courses. They should have scored at least 55% in the previous qualifying exam. Annual family income must be ₹2.5 lakhs or less. Preference will be given to those who are facing a personal or family crisis (in the last three years), due to which they are unable to bear the cost of education and are at risk of dropping out.
Rewards: Up to ₹75,000
Deadline: March 15
Application: Online
b4s.in/plus/HEC12

OakNorth STEM Scholarship Programme
Aims to support meritorious and underprivileged girl students pursuing graduation in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) subjects from government institutions.
Eligibility: Girl students from Haryana who have passed Class 12 and are pursuing graduation (any year) in STEM-related subjects from government universities or colleges and have scored 60% aggregate or above in Class 12 (or equivalent) exam. Annual family income must be less than ₹6 lakhs from all sources. Applicants who are in the second, third, or fourth year must have scored at least 60% in the previous class/semester.
Rewards: ₹30,000
Deadline: March 15
Application: Online
b4s.in/plus/ONSS1

Keep India Smiling Foundational Scholarship and Mentorship Programme
Colgate-Palmolive (India) Ltd. offers students an opportunity to pursue their academic/career aspirations by providing them with scholarships for education.
Eligibility: Students who have passed Class 10 with at least 75% marks or Class 12 with at least 60% marks in the 2022 board exams. Annual family income must be less than ₹5 lakhs per annum.
Rewards: Up to ₹50,000 per year for up to four years of studies depending on current level of education.
Deadline: March 31
Application: Online
b4s.in/plus/KISF6

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

Safe harbour at risk

Regulation of Net intermediaries must not involve unreasonable requirements

In formally outlining the crux of the proposed Digital India Act, 2023, the Minister of State, IT, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, made a case for a robust replacement of the IT Act, 2000, which is somewhat obsolete now. He ominously added a question that the government sought to revisit: "should there be a 'safe harbour' at all for all intermediaries?" This acquires significance as the government has been working towards increasing the compliance burden on Internet intermediaries, in particular in the IT Rules 2021 and its later amendments. These Rules themselves had put the onus on social media intermediaries to arbitrate on content on their platforms with regulations that were weighted in favour of the government of the day, and had invited legal appeals as digital news media platforms among others questioned the constitutionality of the Rules. Meanwhile, an amendment in October 2022 provided for government-appointed committees that will adjudicate on an individual user's appeals against moderation decisions of these intermediaries. In January 2023, the IT Ministry proposed an amendment on the take down of social media/news content that has been marked as "fake" or "false" by the Press Information Bureau or any other government agency. These, in sum, had already put the safe harbour protections for intermediaries at much risk.

Regulation of hate speech and disinformation on the Internet is a must and intermediaries, including digital news media and social media platforms, have an accountable role to play. The IT Rules' specifications on giving users prior notice before removing content or disabling access, and for intermediaries to come up with periodic compliance reports are well taken. Social media intermediaries should not shut down users' posts or communications except in the interests of public order and to avoid legal consequences. But care should be taken to ensure that requirements on intermediaries should not become needlessly onerous and punitive, which also vitiate the principle of safe harbour. There is a legitimate concern that the government is keener on regulating or taking down critical opinion or dissent in social media/news platforms than hate speech or disinformation, which in many cases has originated from representatives of the state. Safe harbour provisions, in particular Section 230 of the U.S. Communications Decency Act, 1996, that explicitly provided immunity to online services with respect to user-generated content had gone a long way in catalysing the Net's development. While modern regulations to tackle issues related to misinformation, problematic content and the side effects of the new form of the Internet are a must, they should still retain first principles of safe harbour without whittling down their core.

New reality

Saudi Arabia, Iran should be mindful of pitfalls ahead while seeking a cold peace

The Saudi-Iran reconciliation in a China-brokered agreement reflects the new reality in West Asia where old rivals are warming up to each other and Beijing is increasingly willing to play a bigger role at a time when the U.S., the region's traditional great power, is preoccupied with challenges elsewhere. The enmity between Iran, a Shia-majority theocracy, and Saudi Arabia, a Sunni-majority absolute monarchy, has been one of the dominant drivers of conflicts in the region. While the details are yet to be unveiled, officials say Iran has agreed to prevent attacks against Saudi Arabia, including those from the Houthi-controlled parts of Yemen, and both countries would restore full diplomatic relations, which were severed in 2016. In recent years, West Asia has seen similar realignments. In 2020, the UAE was among the first Arab countries to normalise ties with Israel in a quarter century. The following years saw the Arab world and Israel, faced with the common Iran challenge, deepening their cooperation, despite Israel's brutal occupation of Palestine territory. As the U.S. has deprioritised West Asia – it is now heavily focused on Ukraine and countering China's Indo-Pacific influence – its allies in West Asia have started looking out for solutions for what they see as America's diminishing security guarantees.

The agreement also marks China's arrival in West Asia as a power broker. China has been involved in multilateral peace talks such as the 2015 Iran nuclear deal (from which the U.S. unilaterally withdrew in 2018), but this is the first time Beijing is using its leverage directly to bring conflicting parties to reconciliation. Stability in West Asia, a major energy source, is essential for China, which is the world's largest oil importer. And unlike the U.S., which has hostile ties with Iran, Beijing enjoys good ties with Tehran and Riyadh, as a leading oil buyer and trading partner, respectively. This has put China in a unique position to bring two of the region's most significant powers closer. Saudi Arabia, which is undergoing rapid changes, wants peace in its neighbourhood, while Iran, which is under the U.S.-imposed sanctions, wants more diplomatic and economic openings. If the détente holds, it will have far-reaching implications on regional geopolitics, from peace in Yemen to stability in Lebanon. But it is too early to say whether peace would hold between the two, given their multilayered enmity. Saudi Arabia, Iran and China should be mindful of the pitfalls ahead and continue to build on the momentum created now to achieve a cold peace between the two regional powers.

Using Ukraine as a bellwether is a path to tragedy

M.K. Narayanan

is a former Director, Intelligence Bureau, a former National Security Adviser, and a former Governor of West Bengal

There is much sound and fury around Ukraine these days, but it is becoming difficult to decipher the truth. What is not disputed is that Ukraine is indeed engaged in a 'struggle for existence'. Notwithstanding its heroic struggle, there is a slow realisation that the Ukraine war is approaching a stalemate. In current reckoning, it would seem that matters can only go downhill from here as Russia appears intent on employing enhanced aerial attacks, which includes the latest hypersonic missiles to subdue Ukraine.

Consequently, and while applauding the heroism of the Ukraine people, serious attempts are being made across Europe, – this includes France, Germany and the United Kingdom – on how to bring about an end to the war. Neither side is likely to be able to claim a decisive victory, and any expectations that Russia can be compelled to withdraw from areas where it made initial gains are considered extremely remote. The initial euphoria seems to have been replaced by 'battle fatigue', and with the Ukraine imbroglio beginning to be viewed as a 'US backed NATO proxy war' against Russia, European leaders are at present engaged in finding ways and means to bring about a ceasefire, than in perpetuating the conflict.

Impact on Europe

Several other reasons can also be adduced for Europe's current mind-set. First, notwithstanding the generous supply of state-of-the-art weapons from the United States, Europe is painfully aware that it remains entirely at the mercy of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the U.S. today. Europe's defence industry continues to remain extremely fragile, and prospects that this would change appear remote, thus perpetuating Europe's dependence on the U.S. and NATO. Second, in the realm of economics, Europe is hurting, and the prospect of a prolonged stalemate and a war without end appears highly daunting. European leaders, including Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz, are now engaging in quiet diplomacy to end the war, without making it appear that Europe has had to make major compromises.

What has become all too evident, meanwhile, to not only Europe but also to much of the world is that the Ukraine conflict has convincingly demonstrated that the U.S. was the true defender of Europe, and in a manner not seen after World War II. Firmly entrenched in the peoples' psyche is that without the U.S., Europe would neither have come together nor provided Ukraine with whatever support it needed to resist Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

> Ukraine and the war in Europe is hardly a laboratory for similar experiments elsewhere

The convincing demonstration of U.S. superiority over Russian weaponry in regard to shoulder-fired surface to air missiles, anti-tank weapons such as the Javelin, and launchers such as HIMARS (High Mobility Artillery Mobility Rocket System), has since given the U.S. additional confidence to take on all comers. In turn, this kind of thinking might well lead them to the next stage of convincing the world that the U.S. today can stave-off any challenge to its supremacy.

The situation is pregnant with many possibilities. The Ukraine adventure or misadventure is, however, helping the U.S. to erase images of its retreat from Afghanistan which had greatly hollowed out the reputation of the U.S. as a world power. This has since fuelled new ambitions in U.S. and western minds.

Both the right and wrong lessons could well be derived from this. It could encourage a U.S., flush with its recent success in Europe, to believe that the momentum now lies with it, and that if there is a tide in the affairs of a nation which if exploited at the right time can lead to success, then this is, perhaps, the best time and opportunity for such experimentation.

Such reasoning could also prove dangerous. Ukraine and the war in Europe is hardly a laboratory for similar experiments elsewhere. U.S. 'triumphalism' or what it might have achieved in Ukraine without the loss of a single American life, as also the demonstration of the superiority of its weaponry, could also lead to misadventures. China is clearly not Ukraine, or for that matter Russia, and Asia is not Europe. What has taken place in Ukraine and Europe cannot be a bellwether for what might happen if a conflict with China in the Indo-Pacific were to take place.

China's strong stance

For its part, China is preparing for all eventualities. The language being used by China today is among the harshest and most direct in recent times. Alleging that the U.S. is engaged in the suppression and containment of China, it has warned that "if the US does not hit the brakes and continue to speed down the wrong path, no amount of guardrails can prevent derailment, leading to conflict and confrontation". Chinese President Xi Jinping for his part, has directly accused the U.S. and western countries of the all-round containment, encirclement and suppression of China.

Many of these statements were made on the sidelines of the National People's Congress (NPC) held earlier this month, with China's newly appointed Foreign Minister, Qin Gang, openly accusing the U.S. of attempting to encircle China through its Indo-Pacific strategy (which, according to him, was an Asia- Pacific version of NATO) and whose real purpose was to encircle China.

Chinese criticism tends to be usually obtuse and seldom direct, but it has been unusually forthright this time, prompting concerns that China may be getting ready for a direct confrontation with the U.S., so as to effectively thwart a U.S. effort to restore its dominant position in world affairs.

Adding grist to such concerns is the Chinese leader Xi Jinping's call to delegates attending the recent NPC, *viz.*, to maximise its 'national strategic capabilities' in a bid to "systematically upgrade the country's overall strength and safeguard its strategic interests and realise its strategic objectives".

While Taiwan may remain the flashpoint in the Indo-Pacific, further aggravated by the repeated visits in recent weeks of top U.S. military leaders to Taiwan, newer tensions are adding fresh grist to possibilities of a conflict in other regions in the Indo-Pacific. U.S. claims in the wake of the Ukraine conflict, of defeating all-comers, could instigate more tensions that lead on to a conflict which comes perilously close to an open confrontation culminating in a war.

The danger of provoking a world war

All wars start with a misreading, or misunderstanding, of the intentions of the other side. The U.S.'s success in assisting Ukraine to withstand the Russian offensive and, incidentally undermining Russia's image of being a kind of super power in Europe, appears to be encouraging the U.S. and certain other western powers to redefine the global power equation and seek a return to the post-1945 period in world affairs. After Europe, the target appears to be China.

It would, however, be a gross misreading of the situation if the U.S. were to attempt the containment of China at this time, flush with its success in Europe and provoking retaliation elsewhere, thus paving the way for a new world conflict. It could turn out to be a tragedy of gigantic proportions.

Adultery as misconduct and judicial musings

R.K. Vij

is a former Special Director General of Police of Chhattisgarh

More than four years ago, the Supreme Court of India decriminalised adultery in its landmark judgment, *Joseph Shine versus Union of India* (September 2018). It held Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code (on adultery) along with Section 198 of the Criminal Procedure Code to be unconstitutional on the premise that these provisions were violative of Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution of India.

Aggrieved by the order concerning its implementation in the armed forces, the Union of India sought clarification from the Court saying that any promiscuous or adulterous acts should be allowed to be governed by the relevant sections of the Army Act, the Air Force Act and the Navy Act being special legislations by the virtue of Article 33 of the Constitution. Under Article 33, Parliament has powers to restrict or abrogate the fundamental rights of certain categories of persons, including members of the armed forces to ensure the proper discharge of their duties and the maintenance of discipline among them. The Court, recently, without going into the nuances of relevant sections of the special legislations (i.e., the Army Act and similar special Acts) said that in *Joseph Shine* it 'was not at all concerned with the effect and operation of the relevant provisions' and 'it is not as if this Court approved of adultery'. The Court further added that it found adultery as a moral (and civil) wrong and a ground for securing dissolution of marriage. With these observations, the case was disposed of.

Issue of discharge of duties

The moot question is whether these observations by the Court give an impression that the armed forces may go ahead with disciplinary action for the misconduct of adulterous acts (as understood in common parlance without reference to Section 497 of the IPC) under their special legislations?

> The point made is about establishing that an adulterous act has 'some nexus" with the conduct of the person's professional duties

Consequent to the Joseph Shine case, the Rajasthan High Court, in *Mahesh Chand Sharma versus State of Rajasthan and Others* (2019), set aside the departmental proceedings against the petitioner who was serving as an inspector in the Rajasthan Police (after having served for 18 years in the Indian Air Force) and allegedly had illicit relations with one woman constable and had also 'begotten a child from illicit relations'. The High Court held that no employer can be allowed to do moral policing on its employees which go beyond the domain of his public life and personal choices and selections (to have sexual intercourse) cannot be a subject matter of departmental proceedings under the Service Conduct Rules.

More recently, in *Maheshbhai Bhurjibhai Damor versus State of Gujarat and 3 other(s)* (2022), the Gujarat High Court quashed and set aside the dismissal order of an armed police constable arising from allegations that he had developed illicit relations with a widow which amounted to misconduct. The departmental inquiry revealed that the relations between the two were voluntary and mutual, and there was no exploitation of the woman. The Court held that in order to prove misconduct, allegations must have some nexus, direct or indirect, with the duties to be performed by the government servant. As the alleged act was a private affair, and not a result of any coercive pressure, the act of the petitioner at the most could be considered as an immoral act; however, to term it as misconduct as per Conduct Rules would be too far-fetched.

A corollary may also be drawn with the conduct of an army personnel who consumes alcohol. Unless, the drinking habits or any such act of an officer affects the discharge of his duties or discipline of the force, no departmental action is initiated. It is nobody's secret that army canteens officially provide alcohol to their men and officers at subsidised rates at all locations. A section of society may consider drinking alcohol as an immoral act, but this does not authorise the employer to initiate disciplinary action. In other words, some private space is given even to army personnel where moral policing is not allowed.

A caveat that cannot be overlooked

Though Article 33 of the Constitution empowers Parliament to restrict the fundamental rights of the members of the armed forces, the caveat of 'so as to ensure the proper discharge of their duties and the maintenance of discipline among them' cannot be overlooked. The same principle will also apply to members of the forces charged with the maintenance of public order, i.e., the police personnel of all States and Union Territories, intelligence and counter-intelligence agencies including their communication sections as provided in Article 33 of the Constitution.

Therefore, neither did the Joseph Shine verdict of 2018 inhibit the parameters of departmental proceedings nor has the clarification sought enlarged them. It is true that many acts and omissions which are not necessarily criminal in nature may amount to acts unbecoming of a government servant. A common thread running through all relevant judgments is that if the conduct interferes directly or indirectly with the honest discharge of duties; such conduct may be considered as unbecoming of a government servant. The legislative intent of Article 33 of the Constitution is also similar. Therefore, the sacrosanct right to privacy available to the members of the armed forces (and the policemen engaged in the maintenance of public order) cannot be taken away under the guise of the special legislations unless it has some nexus with their duties.

The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

T.N. Governor and Bill

The central question is whether the Governor of Tamil Nadu, R.N. Ravi, was justified in sending back the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Online Gambling and Regulation of Online Games Bill, 2022, on March 8, to the Legislature on the ground that since gambling and betting are done online, it is a cybercrime, and hence a matter for Parliament to legislate.

The legislative powers are clearly defined and divided. Gambling and betting fall under item 34 of the State list.

But for it being carried out online, it cannot deprive the State legislature from passing a law on gambling which affects the lives of several people and brings ruin to their families. If this logic were to apply, then many crimes falling under the State list and which are carried out online would be offences against which the State legislature cannot possibly pass a law. This will virtually lead to a breakdown in law and order, which is a State subject.

N.G.R. Prasad,
Chennai

Continuing shame

In a country where manual scavenging was banned almost three decades ago (1993), it is a no-brainer that the inhuman practice is still prevalent only because of governmental apathy, administrative corruption and caste bias (Inside pages, March 5). The subhuman act has shifted from village grounds to colourfully painted town panchayat toilets.

One can echo what an expert on social exclusion lamented with extreme consternation: "When Indian science has touched the moon, why is it taking so long to reach our toilets and sewer pipes?"

Ayyasseri Raveendranath,
Aranmula, Kerala

Toxic air

The fire at the Brahmapuram waste treatment plant in Kochi, Kerala, is leading to an environmental disaster. The fire broke out on March 2 and the poisonous air has spread 75 kilometres to the south; the town of Alappuzha reports an air quality index of 300 instead of an average of 120. The question of who exactly is responsible for this disaster remains unanswered, with the local government and the State administration failing miserably to control the fire.

K.A. Solaman,
S.L. Puram, Alappuzha, Kerala

Food safety and health

In today's busy world people have to work so hard to make a living that there is no time for even a well-prepared meal. From a cup of tea or coffee to dinner, it has become quite common for people to rely on hotels. In many hotels, one finds hot food being wrapped in plastic parcelling material. The plastic is bound to melt and enter the food. Many face danger as food safety personnel and municipal sanitary personnel seem to be looking the other way. Plastic being used in food packaging must be banned.

Alamuri Sai Dinesh,
Vuyyuru, Andhra Pradesh

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address.

Reimagining the urban-rural dichotomy

Srikumar Chattopadhyay,

geographer, was with the Centre for Earth Science Studies and is now with the Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation, Thiruvananthapuram

The traditional dichotomy of rural and urban, and the accordingly mandated governance structure, seems inadequate to understand and act upon poverty, undernourishment, education, health, environmental management or even development. For, between the two extremes lies an intermediate settlement formation where rural and urban functions coexist without distinguishable boundaries. Such formations evolve due to interactions of a complex set of geographical, cultural, economic and historical processes. The rural-urban continuum or urban-rural continuum has drawn wide attention in recent years. Under this axiom, it is acknowledged that the transition from rural to urban follows a graded curve of development, and opportunities for social and economic development depend on one's location along this curve.

Nuanced perspectives

A 2021 World Bank Policy Research Working Paper, 'Economic and social development along the urban-rural continuum-New opportunities to inform policy,' advocated adopting the notion of urban catchment areas delienated along an urban-rural continuum. Identification of such areas would help understand urban-rural interconnections, which is important for making policy decisions across development sectors and for addressing issues related to environment and natural resources management. This would support geographically nuanced perspectives in development, required to address increasing spatial inequality.

A 2008 report of the Desakota Study Team, 'Re-imagining the Rural Urban Continuum,' was based on studies in eight countries around the world including India. It emphasised understanding the changing relationship between ecosystems and livelihoods under diversified economic systems across the rural-urban continuum as this has important policy implications at all levels. The term Desakota is an Indonesian usage to designate the formation of rural-urban continuum.

In India, Kerala is well known for the rural-urban continuum in the coastal plain. This was noted even by Moroccan traveller Ibn Batuta in the 14th century. The trend further spread over the lowlands and adjoining midlands and highlands. Geographical factors supported by affirmative public policy promoting distributive justice and decentralisation have increased rural-urban linkages and reduced rural-urban differences in major parts of Kerala. In recent years, the rural-urban continuum has developed in various parts of the country, although the underlying factors propping them up are different from those noted in Kerala. The urban industrial interaction fields in India are spreading by linking rural areas and also small towns around the mega cities and urban corridors penetrating rural hinterlands.

Collapsing barriers

In 30 years, technology and economic globalisation have increased mobility of resources and people, and enhanced inter- and intra-country connectivity. The extension of transport and communication systems, improved access to energy, increased affordability private and public transport as well as penetration of economic and other networks into remote areas promote a rural-urban continuum. The barriers due to physical distance is melting as increasing rural-urban linkages have given rise to diffused network regions. Rural hinterlands are connected to multiple urban centres. The movement of goods, people, information and finance between sites of production and consumption has strengthened linkages between production and labour markets. As the pull factors grow, push factors driving populations out from both rural areas and urban areas are also intensifying. In the process, a mixed economy zone of primary and secondary-tertiary sectors has evolved.

The rural-urban continuum areas also witness changing ecosystems. Agriculturally productive lands are being given for other uses. Food security zones are being reconfigured. Areas for pollutant filtering are declining. There is an increase in waste dump, enhanced disaster risk, and elevated vulnerability. The access of local people to water, food, fuel, fodder and fibre from ecosystems is reducing. At the same time, intermediary market institutions are emerging to provide these goods, which has significant implications for the local people. There is also escalation of market value of land, which further marginalises them.

Discussions on social and economic development and environmental issues and their inter-linkages are not complete without acknowledging the rural-urban continuum. Viewing social and economic transformation through this lens will help identify challenges for improving both urban and rural governance and opportunities for enhanced access to employment, services, institutional resources and environmental management. The institutional connections between rural and urban areas operate at different levels for various development sectors. The key challenge of decision-making is to build rural-urban partnership. To achieve this, a systems approach is recommended where the city and the surroundings form a city region for which a perspective plan is prepared integrating rural and urban plans within a common frame. The city and the rural areas will finally move towards a post-urban world where the rural-dichotomy will no longer exist. It is important that the rural urban linkages are better mapped, for which satellite-based settlement data and its integration with Census data may be useful.

The rural-urban continuum has drawn wide attention in recent years

The 2019 coup still haunts Maharashtra

Fadnavis' remarks have renewed speculation about a backchannel between BJP and NCP

STATE OF PLAY

Shoumojit Banerjee
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Like the ghost of Hamlet's father, the spirit of the 2019 government formation, which rattled Maharashtra, refuses to rest. Recently, in an interview to a news channel, Deputy Chief Minister and BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis stirred up a hornet's nest when he stated that his attempt to form a government with NCP leader Ajit Pawar in November 2019 had the backing of NCP chief Sharad Pawar.

BJP State president Chandrashekhar Bawankule then claimed that while Mr. Sharad Pawar was "not averse" to an alliance with the BJP after the 2019 Assembly elections, he did not approve of Mr. Fadnavis being made Chief Minister in such a scenario. The question is, why has Mr. Fadnavis chosen this moment – over three years after he and Mr. Ajit Pawar were 'secretly' sworn-in in the presence of then Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari – to ruffle feathers?

The plot thickened when Mr. Sharad Pawar, while dismissing Mr. Fadnavis' statement as false, said that had the morning swearing-in exercise with his nephew not occurred, President's rule would never have been lifted from Maharashtra and Uddhav Thackeray could not have been Chief Minister of the tripartite Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government. Was he hinting that the morning coup had in fact been stage-managed? He later commented that his remark about lifting President's rule had been "made in jest." However, given Mr. Sharad Pawar's legendary reputation for adroit political manoeuvring, any statement

by him is hard to dismiss as mere jest.

Whatever the truth about Mr. Fadnavis' recent revelations, the BJP's backroom intrigue with the ideologically opposed NCP originated prior to the 2014 Maharashtra Assembly elections. The long-standing alliances between the BJP and the Shiv Sena and between the Congress and the NCP had broken down then, and all the four parties contested the polls individually. While the BJP emerged as the single-largest party in the State, it failed to secure a simple majority. Immediately after the results, the NCP offered unsolicited support to the BJP when the Shiv Sena dithered on forming a government with its saffron partner. Back then, Mr. Sharad Pawar had justified this by saying the NCP was being offered in the interest of providing Maharashtra with a stable government. However, the BJP snubbed the NCP. Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena then patched up with the BJP to form the government, with Mr. Fadnavis as Chief Minister.

But the BJP's relations with the Shiv Sena continued to be fraught throughout the government's tenure (2014-19). Each time when relations between the two parties hit a new low, the BJP's top brass paid 'non-political' visits to Mr. Sharad Pawar's stronghold of Baramati in Pune district. This was seen as the BJP's strategy to keep the Shiv Sena in check. In February 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Mr. Pawar and praised the "Baramati model of development." Later, the then Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and Mr. Fadnavis also visited Baramati and paid tribute to Mr. Sharad Pawar's "commitment to development."

In this light, Mr. Fadnavis' statements could indicate that the BJP is open to alternatives in the near future. It could also be read as a way of keeping a check on Eknath Shinde's Sena. In this reading, Mr. Fadnavis, who was compelled to defer the post to Chief Minister Mr. Shinde following the latter's coup last year, is anxious to ensure that Mr. Shinde does not become more popular than him.

Furthermore, the NCP's decision last week to offer unsolicited support to the NDPP-BJP government in Nagaland only seems to reinforce the notion that a backchannel between the NCP and the BJP is operational. This was denied by the NCP chief who said that his party was backing Nagaland's Neiphiu Rio and not the BJP.

Whatever be the case, Mr. Fadnavis and the BJP also hope to take advantage of the deepening fault-lines within the MVA. After the Election Commission of India's decision to grant the Shiv Sena party name and symbol to the Shinde faction, the greatly weakened Thackeray Sena is fully dependent on the NCP and the Congress in the alliance. The NCP is undoubtedly the strongest of the three, with its partners often accusing it of seeking to expand at their expense. Mr. Fadnavis and Mr. Ajit Pawar, who is Leader of the Opposition, share good relations. Should Mr. Shinde get too big for his boots, Mr. Fadnavis may 'recruit' Mr. Ajit Pawar as his man into the BJP.

Survey debunks Swachh Bharat's 100% ODF claim

Over 21% of rural households do not have access to any type of toilet, according to a government survey

DATA POINT

Vignesh Radhakrishnan

Yet another released recently government survey has called into question the Central government's claim in 2019 that all Indian villages are open defecation-free (ODF). However, four government surveys/reports released just before or after the announcement, including the latest Multiple Indicator Survey (MIS), have not only disputed the ODF status of most States but also shown persisting levels of poor sanitation in many of them.

The three older surveys which disputed the ODF status were the National Statistical Office (NSO) survey from October 2018, the National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey (NARSS) of 2019-20, and the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) 2019-21.

For instance, according to data from the Swachh Bharat Mission, Gramin (SBMG) portal, villages in Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu were declared 100% ODF by October 2018. However, according to NSO data, only 71% and 62.8% of rural households in Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, respectively, had access to some form of latrine (own, shared, public) in the same month. The SBMG data claimed that in 24 States/UTs, over 99% of rural households had individual household latrine as of March 2019, whereas the NARSS data recorded six months later showed that in 24 States/UTs, less than 90% of the rural households had access to their own toilets. According to the SBMG data, 99.4% of rural households in Gujarat had individual latrines as of March 2019. However, according to NFHS data, in the second half of 2019, only 63.3% of the population in rural households in Gujarat used individual toilets.

According to the MIS released in March this year, conducted between January 2020 and August 2021, in 21.3% of rural households, a majority said they had no access to any type of latrine (own, shared, public). The MIS survey is the fourth in the last five years to debunk the ODF claim.

Map 1 shows the percentage of rural households in which a majority of the members reported access to some type of latrine, as per the MIS survey. For instance in Kerala, 100% said they had access, while in Uttar Pradesh only 74.2% had such access.

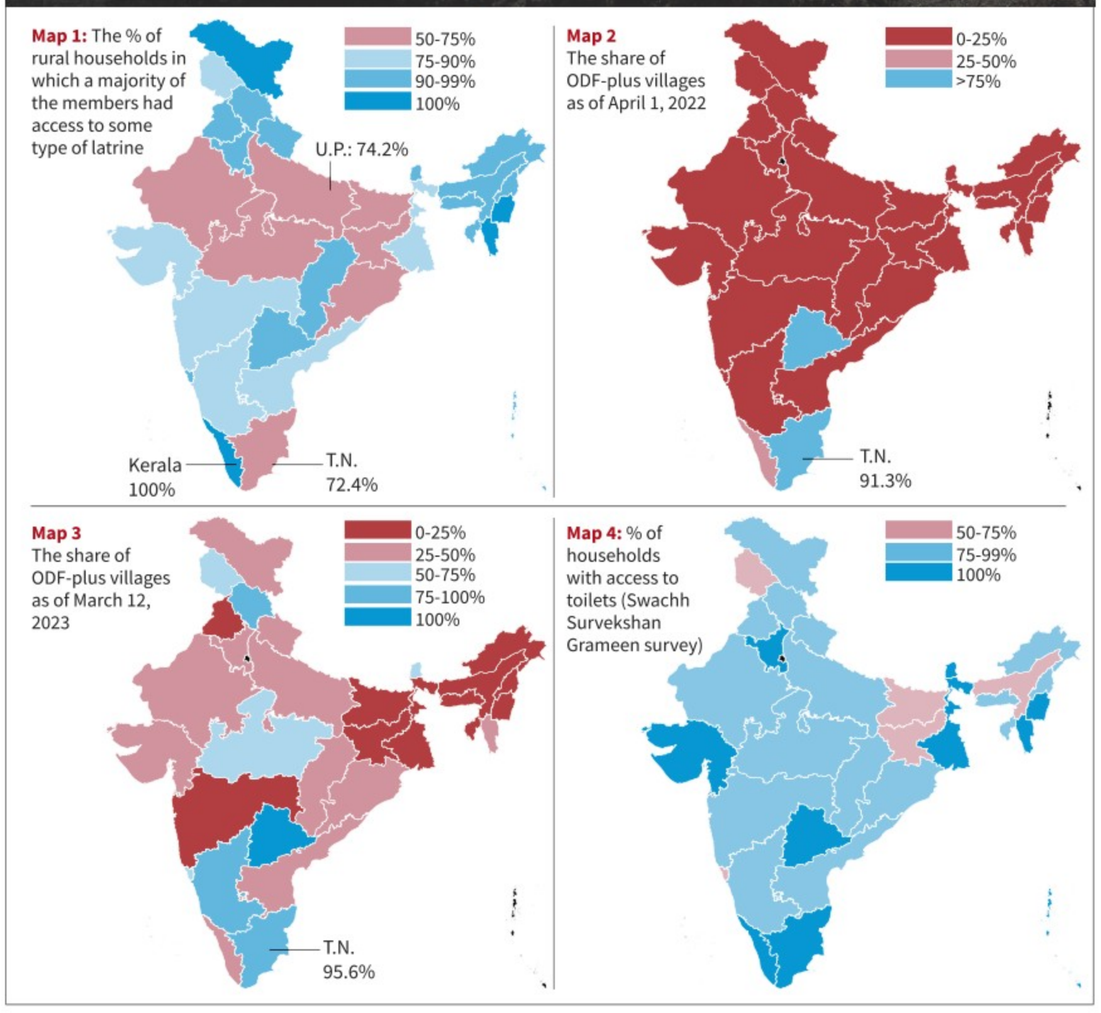
Notably, while the goal of Swachh Bharat Gramin phase-1 were yet to be achieved, the government unveiled phase-2, which extended toilet coverage to schools/anganwadis, and said all villages should have solid/liquid waste management systems. The villages which met these criteria were named ODF-plus villages. Due to the clubbing of goals, the share of rural households with toilet access (the goal of phase-1) was not tracked separately any more. Also, phase-1 related indicators were removed from the dashboard. **Map 2** shows the share of such ODF-plus villages as of April 1, 2022. Overall in India, only 8% of villages attained this ODF-plus status back then. Tamil Nadu's share was over 91%. Interestingly, just a year ago, according to the MIS survey, only 72.4% of rural households in Tamil Nadu had access to some form of toilet.

The share of ODF-plus villages in India improved to 34% as of March 12, 2023. The State-wise share is shown in **Map 3**.

While the SBMG dashboard does not track toilet access separately, the Swachh Survekshan Grameen survey (December 2021-April 2022) lists the percentage of households with access to toilets **(Map 4)**. It concluded that in 28 States, the share of such households crossed 90% and India's average was 95%, wildly different from the figures of the MIS survey completed six months earlier.

Out in the open

The maps are based on data sourced from the Multiple Indicator Survey, the Swachh Bharat Gramin dashboard and the Swachh Survekshan Grameen survey



FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 13, 1973

Tata Zamindari abolition Act stayed

New Delhi, March 12: The Supreme Court to-day stayed the implementation of the Bihar Land Reforms (Amendment) Act 1972, which seeks to abolish Tata's Zamindari in the township of Jamshedpur. The court passed the interim stay order after admitting a writ petition filed jointly by Mr. J.R.D. Tata and Mr. Moolgaokar, Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Tata Iron and Steel Company Limited. The petitioners contended that the impugned act, which had been described as an act to abolish "the alleged Tata zamindari," was a hostile and discriminatory legislation directed against the petitioner company alone. The petitioners contended the act was a fraud on the legislative power in the garb of land reforms or agrarian reforms. It had been passed for a political purpose and would cripple a viable national industry. They contended that the properties of the company did not constitute an "estate" within the meaning of Article 31 A and that the amended act could not be described as a law for agrarian reforms. The act was liable to be struck down for being violative of the fundamental rights guaranteed in Articles 14, 19 (1) (F) and (G) and 31 (2) of the Constitution, they submitted. The writ petitions came up for preliminary hearing before the constitution bench comprising Mr. Justice J.M. Shelat, Mr. Justice A.N. Ray, Mr. Justice D.G. Palekar, Mr. Justice S.N. Dwivedi and Mr. Justice Y.V. Chandrachud. But Mr. Justice Shelat and Mr. Justice Chandrachud did not participate in the proceedings as, they said, they were shareholders of the company. The orders were passed by the remaining three judges. Mr. N.A. Palkiwala and Mr. T.R. Andhyarujina appealed for the petitioners.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 13, 1923

War memorial

Lahore, March 12: An impressive ceremony took place in Lahore Cathedral yesterday when the screens which had been erected in the sanctuary to the memory of the members to the S. and T. corps in India and the Punjab.Light Horse who fell in the war 1914/1918 were unveiled by His Excellency the Governor of the Punjab and dedicated by the Bishop of Lahore.

From Page One

‘Same-sex union can rock societal values’

The court, while decriminalising homosexuality, had never accepted same-sex marriage as part of the fundamental right to life and dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution.

It said statutory recognition of heterosexual marriage was the norm throughout history and is “foundational to both the existence and continuance of the state”.

The government said a same-sex marriage cannot be compared to a man and woman living as a family with children born out of the union. “Living together as partners and having sexual relationship by same-sex individuals [which is decriminalised now] is not comparable with the Indian family unit concept of a husband, a wife and children...” the government contended.

Registration of marriage of same-sex persons would also result in violation of existing personal as well as codified law provisions.

The government said there was a “compelling interest” for the society and the state to limit recognition to heterosexual marriages only.

Several petitions, including ones by partners Supriyo @ Supriya Chakraborty and Abhay Dang, have been filed. They argued that the non-recognition of same-sex marriage amounted to discrimination that struck at the root of the dignity and self-fulfillment of LGBTQ+ couples. A separate petition was also filed by Parth Phiroze Mehrotra and Uday Raj Anand.

The court had issued separate notices to the Union of India and the Attorney General of India. It had transferred various pending issues before various High Courts, including in Kerala and Delhi, to itself.

Senior advocates Mukul Rohatgi, Neeraj Kishan Kaul, Menaka Guruswamy, and advocate Arundhati Katju had argued that this was a sequel to the Navtej Johar case.

The petitioners had said the 1954 Act should grant same-sex couples the same protection it allowed inter-caste and inter-faith couples who want to marry.

SVB ‘contagion’ may leave India unscathed

“We don’t know if it will rain, but we will keep an umbrella handy,” the official said, signalling that the government and financial sector regulators are keeping close tabs on the situation and the likely impact on the Indian economy.

“At this point, it is not yet clear if there will be ripple or contagion effects on more banks in the U.S. following this bank’s woes. So we don’t expect any major effects to spill over on our economy for a while... There may only be some impact on individual start-ups and tech companies who get some funding from there,” another official said.

‘No systemic issues’

The official quoted earlier also asserted that there should be no systemic issues from the bank’s troubles for India. “It may affect specific companies that have investments from SVB or IT firms that have deposited some of their US operations’ income there,” he said. However, the official noted that the underlying issue could hit other banks too, citing veteran banker Uday Kotak’s remark on the SVB impasse that this was an accident waiting to happen. “It could happen elsewhere too as government bond holdings of past have lost value owing to the rise in yields and need to be marked to market and the losses provided for,” the official averred.

Officials don’t expect similar challenges for Indian banks or financial institutions as the cumulative rate hike of 250 basis points effected by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) over the past year, have still only taken interest rates “back to pre-Covid levels, while the surge in the U.S. [rates] has been much sharper”. One basis point (bp) equals 0.01%.

INS Sahyadri joins maritime exercise with French Navy

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Navy’s guided missile frigate *INS Sahyadri* joined two frontline warships of France in carrying out a two-day maritime partnership exercise in the Arabian Sea.

The exercise on Saturday and Sunday witnessed a wide spectrum of drills at sea including cross deck landings, boarding exercises and seamanship evolutions, the officials said.

The French Navy deployed Mistral class amphibious assault ship *FS Dixmude* and La Fayette class frigate *FS La Fayette* in the exercise. “The seamless conduct of the exercise reaffirmed the interoperability and high level of cooperation between the two navies,” the Indian Navy said in a brief statement.

INS Sahyadri is fitted with state-of-the-art weapons and sensors, which makes her capable of detecting and neutralising air, surface and sub-surface threats.

India, Australia for early conclusion of pact on market access

Piyush Goyal and Don Farrell pleased with progress in negotiations; CECA will create new jobs, raise living standards, says joint statement

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Piyush Goyal and Australian Minister Don Farrell at a press meeting after the 18th joint ministerial meeting. TWITTER/@PIYUSHGOYAL

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and his Australian counterpart Don Farrell convened the India-Australia Joint Ministerial Commission on Saturday and discussed negotiations for a full-scale free trade pact and steps to spur investment flows into both countries.

In a joint communique issued on Sunday, Mr. Goyal and Mr. Farrell, Australia’s Trade and Tourism Minister, said they were pleased with the progress in resolving various bilateral technical market access issues and “look forward to concluding” the India-Australia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) soon.

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese look forward to an early conclusion of an ambitious CECA, which will build on the foundation laid by the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement [signed last year], including new areas of trade, investment and cooperation. CECA will create new employment opportunities, raise living standards and improve the general welfare in both countries,” the statement said.

The Ministers also discussed engagements in the G-20, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

On the IPEF, the Ministers said the two countries would continue to work together on areas of mutual interest, including the clean economy and resilient supply chains.

G-20 meet to focus on blue economy, responsible AI

Devesh K. Pandey
GUWAHATI

Responsible AI is a governance framework aimed at which data can be collected and used

Responsible application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the blue economy will be the primary issues in focus during brainstorming sessions at the three-day Supreme Audit Institutions-20 (SAI-20) Engagement Group delegates’ meet starting on Monday. The Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) of India, Girish Chandra Murmu, is the chair of the SAI-20 Engagement Group under India’s G-20 Presidency.

Conserving ocean assets

“’Blue economy’ is the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of our ecosystem.

Responsible AI is a governance framework aimed at which data can be collected and used; how AI models should be evaluated; and how to best deploy and monitor the models. The framework can also define who is accountable for any negative outcomes of AI,” the CAG said in a statement.

Delegates from G-20 member countries, guest nations and other international organisations will attend the event. The SAIs of Australia, Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Oman, South Korea, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates will be participating in-person.

The CAG had earlier proposed collaboration in the SAI-20 Engagement Group on “Blue Economy” and “Responsible AI”. During the meeting in Guwahati, he will present and introduce concept themes on the two issues. The participants will share their experiences in these areas.

Army rescues 370 tourists stranded in snow in Sikkim

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Troops of the Indian Army’s Trishakti Corps helped the local police and administration in Sikkim rescue 370 tourists who were stranded in heavy snowfall on Saturday.

The tourists were stuck in some 100 vehicles that were returning from Nathu La, a mountain pass on the border with China, and Tsomgo or Changuu lake to Gangtok.

The rescue mission, named Operation Himrahat, continued through the night on Saturday, the Guwahati-based defence spokesperson, Lt. Col. Mahendra Rawat, said.

“The tourists were moved to safe areas and provided shelter, warm clothing, medical aid and hot meals. The troops arranged accommodation for the 370 tourists [178 men, 142 women and 50 children],” he said.

Detailed coordination was done with the General Reserve Engineering Force for the road opening on Sunday. The road was cleared to enable the vehicles to move to Gangtok.

Celebration of colours

Happy street: Revellers taking part in the Rang Panchami Gair festival in Indore on Sunday. The district administration has sought the festival’s inclusion in the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. A.M. FARUQUI

Burglary case suspect held

Press Trust of India
KOTA

A member of a gang that allegedly stole antique items and jewellery from the Rao Madho Singh Museum in Rajasthan, has been arrested in Uttar Pradesh, police said. Arun Taiwatia, 28, was arrested from Ghaziabad on Friday.

India’s silence on Beijing’s role in Saudi Arabia-Iran deal is disquieting

NEWS ANALYSIS

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

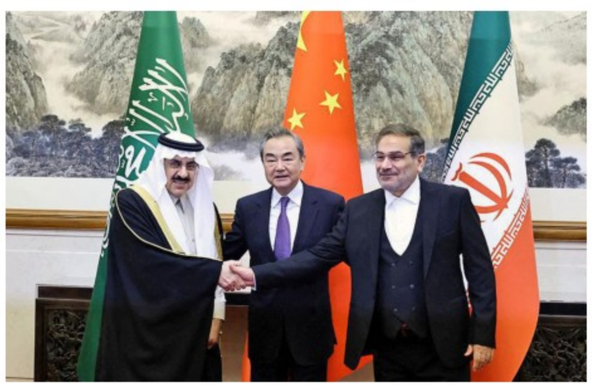
The Saudi Arabia-Iran agreement signed in Beijing on Friday, if successful, will have a far-reaching impact worldwide. The result of negotiations that were kept secret till they reached agreement could signal an easing of tensions between Riyadh and Tehran after many years; peace in Yemen, where the two countries have carried out proxy battles; and a boost for China’s efforts to project itself as a peacemaker.

While the agreement has been welcomed by the United Nations, France, Jordan and West Asian countries, it is also seen as a counter to the U.S.-brokered Abraham Accords, and will be greeted with some concern in the U.S., Israel and the UAE.

Disquieting for Delhi

Though New Delhi has not formally reacted to the announcement so far, the fact that two close partners such as Saudi Arabia and Iran have reached a deal with Beijing’s influence is disquieting, given India’s current tensions with China, experts say. Previous attempts brokered by Iraq and Oman had not succeeded in any breakthrough. “While Saudi-Iranian normalisation is good news, China being the midwife is bad news for South Block,” said P.R. Kumaraswamy, Professor of Contemporary Middle Eastern Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). “However, it is an opportunity for India to rework its priorities and pay serious attention to regional developments” rather than be “surprised” by the development, he added.

Other analysts have pointed to India’s focus on the I2U2 quadrilateral along with Israel, the U.S. and UAE, which may have taken the spotlight away from its ties with Iran and Saudi Arabia. In November, Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammad Bin Salman cancelled a visit to India, which is expected to be rescheduled this year. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian cancelled his participation in this year’s Raisina Dialogue, run by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Observer Research Foundation, reportedly after protesting a promotional video for the event that appeared critical of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.


Chinese leader Wang Yi with Iranian leader Ali Shamkhani and Saudi Arabia’s National Security Adviser Musaad bin Mohammed. REUTERS

Strained U.S-Saudi ties

While the U.S.-Iran tensions are high given the recent breakdown in talks over the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, more commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal, the Beijing agreement also shows up the strain in Washington’s ties with Saudi Arabia. Despite U.S. President Joe Biden’s visit to Riyadh last year, Saudi Arabia refused to heed his request to cap oil prices by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries to reduce demand for Russian oil in the wake of the Ukraine conflict. Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit to Riyadh in December was a stark contrast, in terms of more than a dozen agreements on energy and infrastructure that were signed. Iranian President Mr. Raisi visited Beijing in February, and Mr. Xi is expected to travel to Tehran later to take forward talks on the Belt and Road Initiative and an MoU worth an estimated $400 billion for oil and infrastructure projects.

Diplomats, however, point out that Riyadh’s agreement with Tehran does not signify a rejection of the U.S., so much as it shows that new global players are exerting their influence. “While the balance of power remains with the U.S., its influence and commitment in the region have definitely reduced, given an absence of strategic vision in conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and so on . The past decade has shown many Middle Eastern countries losing faith in the U.S., and broadening their options to players like Russia for energy matters, and China for economic and political matters,” said Talmiz Ahmad, a former Ambassador and author of *West Asia at War.*

More civilian flights from Russia to Indian cities

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

India and Russia have “in principle” agreed to revise their bilateral air services agreement whereby Russian carriers will be allowed to operate as many as 64 weekly flights to various Indian cities, according to a senior official.

Under the existing agreement, Russia can operate up to 52 weekly civilian flights.

India has “in principle” agreed to increase the number of weekly flights that Russian carriers can operate to India to 64. The bilateral air services agreement will be amended in due course, the official said. Currently, Aeroflot is operating seven weekly flights to India while no Indian airline is flying to Russia. Earlier, Air India used to operate flights to Moscow. On the condition of anonymity, the official also said it will take some time before Russian carriers will be able to fully utilise the quota of the total number of weekly flights permitted to operate to India.

Last month, an Indian delegation led by Civil Aviation Secretary Rajiv Bansal visited Moscow for a meeting related to bilateral cooperation in civil aviation.

Adani group repays $2.15-bn loan before March 31 deadline, prepays Ambuja Cements debt

The Hindu Bureau
AHMEDABAD

Gautam Adani

The Adani Group said on Sunday that it has completed full prepayment of margin-linked share-backed financing aggregating to $2.15 billion before the March 31 deadline. Additionally, the promoters have also prepaid the $500-million loan facility taken for financing the acquisition of Ambuja Cements Ltd.

In a statement, the Group said that the entire prepayment programme of $2.65 billion has been completed within six weeks. “This is in line with promoters’ commitment to increase equity contribution, and promoters have now infused $2.6 billion, out of the total acquisition value of $6.6 billion for Ambuja and ACC,” it said. “The entire prepayment programme of $2.65 billion has been completed within six weeks, which testifies the strong liquidity management and access to capital at sponsor level, supplementing the solid capital prudency adopted at all portfolio companies,” the statement said.

The Group began prepayment after its stocks were battered on the bourses after the U.S. short-seller Hindenburg Research published a scathing report on the group’s business practices accusing it of stock manipulation and accounting fraud, allegations that the Group has denied. While the Adani statement has not detailed source of money for repayment, these came within days of the promoters selling minority stakes in four listed companies to U.S.-based GQG Partners for ₹15,446 crore.

Protesting employees meet Bengal Governor

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

A five-member delegation of protesting West Bengal government employees met Governor C.V. Ananda Bose at the Raj Bhavan on Sunday and sought his intervention in the differen ces between them and the State government.

The employees, seeking pay parity on dearness allowance (DA) with Central government employees, while welcoming the Governor's intervention, did not agree to call off their hunger strike.

The employees urged the Governor to mediate and bring West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to the discussion table.

The Governor, in a series of tweets, had said that he was "deeply pained by the hunger strike of the aggrieved employees". "What is of paramount importance is the precious life of our brothers," Mr. Bose said. "The issues involved may be complex but there is always a simple way out to complex problems," he said.

Under fire, Congress gears up to defend Rahul in Parliament

Kharge calls meeting of like-minded parties as Budget Session resumes today; however, other Opposition parties are reluctant to join the row over former Congress president's comments, with Trinamool and BRS likely to skip the meeting

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Setting the tone: Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar chairing an all-party meeting before the second part of the Budget Session in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

With former Congress president Rahul Gandhi under attack in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha for his comments made inside and outside the House, the Congress is preparing for a confrontation with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the second part of the Budget Session that opens on Monday.

But with this being the top agenda, other Opposition parties are reluctant to be part of the campaign.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has called a meeting of "like-minded" Opposition parties on Monday morning, before the session begins. The Trinamool Congress and the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) are likely to skip the meeting.

In the Lok Sabha Privileges Committee, BJP MP Nishikant Dubey has asked for termination of Mr. Gandhi's membership for making "defamatory comments" against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and also for "challenging" the authority of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

While, in the Rajya Sabha, Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar has objected to his comments made abroad "denigrating" Parliament. Facing attack from both ends, the Congress is bracing itself for a duel, but might not find all other Opposition parties on board.

A Trinamool Congress leader, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said his party would decide its own strategy and it need not be dictated by the Congress.

Last week, BRS leader K. Kavitha had said that the Congress was no longer a national force and if it wanted to defeat the BJP, it should be a team player working with the regional parties.

On Sunday evening, Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar met the floor leaders of all parties in the Upper House at his residence in Delhi ahead of the second part of the Budget Session. He spoke at length advising the gathering against "disruptions" being used as a parliamentary tool.

During the meeting, CPI leader Binoy Viswam, according to sources, said that in Parliament, there could be different perspectives and each of them should be reflected in the debate. "We expect the chair to not be an active participant of any side," he said.

To this, Mr. Dhankhar, as per sources retorted, "Not only chair, I am a cheerleader!" The comment was directed at Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh's statement against Mr. Dhankhar. Mr. Ramesh had said that certain offices need to be above partisan politics and "cannot be a cheerleader for any ruling dispensation".

He had released the statement in response to Mr. Dhankhar's earlier remark that comments by a Member of Parliament "tarnishing India's image on foreign soil," could not be condoned.

'All members enjoy unhindered right to express views in LS'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Om Birla

All members enjoy "unhindered right" to express their views in Parliament, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said during his address at the 14th Assembly of Inter-Parliamentary Union.

He was speaking on the topic of "promoting peaceful co-existence and inclusive societies: fight against intolerance".

Mr. Birla, according to a press note released by the Lok Sabha Secretariat, said, "In India, we have a robust participatory democracy and a vibrant multiparty system where hopes and aspirations of the citizens find expression through the elected representatives. All members enjoy the freedom to express their views and thoughts in Lok Sabha."

His comments have to be seen against the backdrop of the Congress attack on him, for expunging 18 portions of former Congress president Rahul Gandhi's speech delivered on February 6. Mr. Gandhi in his speeches across the country has said that he was not allowed to speak in Lok Sabha and that his microphone was muted on multiple occasions.

The global issues, Mr. Birla said, should be resolved peacefully through dialogue. "Parliament has always held extensive and meaningful debate and deliberations on contemporary global challenges such as climate change, gender inequality, sustainable development and COVID-19 pandemic."

Elaborating further, he stressed the need for reform in the United Nations Security Council which could not be delayed any further.

Members of an extremist outfit who surrendered before Chief Minister Pema Khandu in Itanagar on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

15 extremist group members surrender in Arunachal Pradesh

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Fifteen members of a less-known extremist group surrendered before Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu in Itanagar on Sunday.

The 15 include Tosha Mossang, the chief of the Eastern Naga National Government formed in 2016. The members of the group are not known to have cases against them in police stations of the districts where Naga communities reside. Major-General Vikas Lakhera, Inspector-General of Assam Rifles (North) said: "The surrender will bring the TCL [Tirap, Changlang and Longding] region closer to normalcy and is a major setback to the insurgency in southern Arunachal Pradesh."

Karnataka polls will be key to revival plans of Congress

NEWS ANALYSIS

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

The upcoming Karnataka Assembly election will be crucial for the Congress to not only reverse its fortunes after the recent setback in the northeast elections but also take on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) later this year in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan.

Apart from being a morale booster, a win could give the party much-needed elbow room to position itself as the main player to lead a coalition against the BJP ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha election. And since Karnataka is the home State of Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, the BJP is likely to make it a prestige battle to retain the State.

While the BJP has been engaging with former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa to reach out to the powerful Lingayat community that makes up about 17% of the electorate, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to lead the party's campaign in terms of showing development work.

"The BJP seems to be oscillating between insulting and adopting Mr. Yediyurappa, unable to decide if they want to relegate him to the dustbin of history on account of unprecedented corruption as well as hostility towards him by the Prime Minister," said Congress general secretary for Karnataka Randeep Surjewala.

Lingayat outreach

Notwithstanding such brave posturing, the Congress has put in place an outreach mission for the Lingayat community. While senior leader M.B. Patil occupies the top place in the attempts, several other Lingayat leaders, including Lakshmi Hebbalkar, Vijayanand Kashappanavar, Vinay Kulkarni, Shivannd Patil and Yashwantrao Patil, are reaching out to their community.

Poll planning: D.K. Shivakumar, Siddaramaiah and Randeep Surjewala at a Congress yatra in Mangaluru. FILE PHOTO

"The manner in which the BJP has insulted Panchamasali Lingayats has unnerved the community and put them on a warpath," claimed Mr. Surjewala, adding that the Congress would give "substantial representation" to the community while giving away ticket.

Meanwhile, the party would bank on Karnataka Congress chief D.K. Shivakumar to win over the Vokkaligas, the other politically significant community that make up about 14% of the population.

The party is circulating guarantee cards with three guarantees – a monthly guarantee of ₹2,000 to nearly 1.5 crore women under the Grih Lakshmi scheme, 200 units of electricity free under the Grih Jyoti scheme and 10 kg of free rice to BPL families under the Anna Bhagya scheme.

The party has also announced a 10-point separate charter for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as well as a 10-point resolution for the coastal, or karavali, region with promises like making Mangalure the new IT and garment industry hub that can create one lakh jobs.

And to ensure that the message reaches the intended beneficiaries, former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Mr. Shivakumar have not only embarked upon Praja Dhwani yatras across the State but have also signed the guarantee card.

Other challenges

The Congress, however, faces the challenge of keeping at bay the intense factionalism between the Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar camps.

"We are focusing on saving Karnataka from the clutches of the 40% commission government run by the BJP. And all our leaders are aiming at that like Arjuna was aiming at the fish eye... And Mr. Kharge's goodwill will have an electrifying effect on our campaign," said Mr. Surjewala, trying to downplay factional rivalry.

The other possible challenge for the party would be to consolidate the nearly 17% minority votes in its favour.

With Congress taking a somewhat ambivalent stance during the Hijab row, Muslim voters are likely to weigh other options like H.D. Deve Gowda's Janata Dal (S) that has made former Congress strongman C.M. Ibrahim the party's State president.

(With inputs from Nagesh Prabhu in Bengaluru)

RSS to deliberate on giving bigger role for women as annual meet gets under way

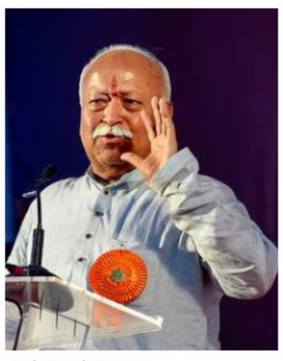
Ishita Mishra
SAMLAKHA (HARYANA)

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) on Sunday paid tributes to late Samajwadi Party (SP) patron Mulayam Singh, socialist leader Sharad Yadav, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mother Hiraben and around hundred other people who died last year, at the beginning of its annual general body meeting at Samalkha, Panipat.

The three-day meet will see several resolutions and discussions including on participation of women in the organisation.

Big changes

The annual general meeting of the RSS, headed by Mohan Bhagwat, is being attended by over 1,400 representatives from 34 organisations directly or indirectly affiliated with the RSS, from all over the country. BJP national president J.P. Nadda and national general secretary B.L. Santosh are also present at the meeting.



Mohan Bhagwat

Sources from the organisation also pointed towards discussions on big organisational changes at the annual meeting, the last before the Lok Sabha election in 2024. The annual meeting decides the agenda of the Sangh for the next year.

Responding to a question on whether the Sangh is planning to increase the participation of women, joint general secretary Manmohan Vaidya said that the organisation is mulling over the issue. We are considering women participation, at least in awareness and discussion programmes, said Mr. Vaidya.

Speaking about the expansion plans of the RSS, Mr. Vaidya said that the Sangh was working at 71,355 places in India and it plans to reach at least 1 lakh places before 2025, that is the 100th year of the RSS. He maintained that 'Shakhas' (the smallest unit of RSS), has seen an impressive rise after pandemic.

He claimed that the Sangh has received 7,25,000 requests of people who are willing to join the organisation, via 'Join RSS' link between 2017 and 2022. Most of those who showed interest were people in the age group of 20 to 35. "60% of the Sangh's branches are student branches," he added.

Less-known parties with national ambitions gain a toehold in Nagaland polls

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

Entry of 'unknown' parties is linked with the beginning of the disintegration of the Congress in State

Less-known parties with 'national' ambitions have succeeded where Congress has failed in the last decade – winning Assembly election seats in Nagaland.

This is a result of a win-win situation for parties who may be unknown in Nagaland, but are seeking to expand beyond their States of origin, as well as for candidates seeking a platform to gain a berth in the 60-member Nagaland Assembly after failing to get ticket from the State's major political players.

Take the cases of the Bihar-origin Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) and the Maharashtra-based Republican Party of India (Athawale). These pro-BJP parties had no presence in Nagaland before the February 27 election was announced, but still managed to win two seats each.

The RPI (Athawale) had a better strike rate as it contested nine seats as against the 16 by the LJP (Ram Vilas).

Other parties with a similar status, but which are slightly more experienced in contesting elections in Nagaland also fared better than expected. The Meghalaya-oriented National People's Party and the Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) won five of the 12 seats that each contested, while the Janata Dal (U) bagged one out of the seven seats it contested.

The Rashtriya Janata Dal failed to win any of the three seats it fought.

According to Jeffrey Yaden, editor of the Dimapur-based *Nagaland Post*, the entry of such "unknown" and "strange" parties is linked with the beginning of the disintegration of Congress in the State ahead of the 2003 Assembly polls.

Parties in demand

"Every leader seeks ticket from parties that are in demand [now, the BJP and NDPP]. Those who miss out seek parties that many in Nagaland are not acquainted with, since the Congress no longer seems to be an option," Mr. Yaden said. The Congress has not won any seat in Nagaland in the last two Assembly elections.

"This is opportunism that works both ways – for political parties from faraway lands seeking the national tag and for resourceful people who want the MLA label. Each uses the other and there is the possibility of such MLAs joining the parties in power," he said.

GOVERNMENT OF RAJASTHAN
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER AND PROJECT MANAGER
Watershed Cell cum Data Centre Jodhpur
S. No. F()/WDSC/PMKSY 2.0/Bids/2022-23/ 6850 Date : 02.03.2023
NOTICE INVITING BID
NIB No. - Jodhpur/03/2022-23
Bids for execution of "Construction of various watershed development structures under PMKSY 2.0 Projects of estimated value as mentioned below are invited from interested bidders up to 13.03.2023, 06.00 PM. Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal (https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in or https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in) of the state, and (https://watershed.rajasthan.gov.in) department website.

Bid No	Block	Cost, Rs. in lakhs	UBN No.
RB/PHA/08/01	Phalodi	276.88	WSC2223WSOB00683
RB/GHA/04/02	Ghantiyali	265.78	WSC2223WSOB00684
RB/MAN/06/03	Mandore	274.70	WSC2223WSOB00685

Superintending Engineer and Project Manager
DIPR/C/3596 Watershed Cell cum Data Centre Jodhpur

Office of the Project Director PMU(RWSRPD)& Chief Engineer
Water Resources(North) Hanumangarh
Notice Inviting Bid
(NIB Code-WRN2223A0095)
Bids for 07 Nos. of works for Relining of bed lining of Indira Gandhi Main Canal, Renovation & modernization of various canals, special repair of bridges/Escape estimated cost of work from Rs. 3.55 Crore to 28.32 Crore are invited from prospective bidders up to 14.03.2023 Time 6.00 PM. Other particulars of the bids may be visited on the procurement portal http://www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in, http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in, of the state and www.water.rajasthan.gov.in departmental website.
UBN NO.
WRN2223WLOB00377, WRN2223WLOB00378, WRN2223WLOB00379, WRN2223WLOB00380, WRN2223WLOB00381, WRN2223WLOB00382, WRN2223WLOB00383
(Amarjeet Singh)
DIPR/C/3463 Project Director PMU(RWSRPD)&Chief Engineer

TAMIL NADU GENERATION AND DISTRIBUTION CORPORATION LTD
E-tenders through e-procurement platform at https://tntenders.gov.in/nicgep/app as per the instructions in the tender specifications Coal(Ship) – 126 Dated 09.03.2023, for time chartering of One self-Trimming Supramax geared vessel for coastal movement of coal by TANGEDCO:

Sl no:	Specification No.	Description of Work/Materials	Due date & Time for submission of e-tender
1	Coal (Ship) - 126 Dated 09.03.2023	TIME CHARTERING OF ONE SELF-TRIMMING SUPRAMAX GEARED VESSEL WITH THE LAYDAYS FROM 25TH MARCH 2023 TO 10TH APRIL 2023 FOR 3 MONTHS +/-15 DAYS CHOPTION	20.03.2023 Upto 14:30 Hours.

Submission of E-Tender: THROUGH THIS HYPERLINK https://tntenders.gov.in/nicgep/app
Date & Time of commencement of download of Tender Specifications Coal(Ship)-126 dt.09.03.2023: 14:30 Hrs. on 13.03.2023.
Date & Time of closing of download of Tender Specifications Coal(Ship)- 126 dt.09.03.2023: 14:30 Hrs. on 20.03.2023.
Soft copy of Tender Specifications: The tender specifications can be downloaded from TANGEDCO website www.tangedco.gov.in. from Tamil Nadu Government Web site i.e. www.tenders.tn.gov.in and from National Informatics Center website https://tntenders.gov.in/nicgep/app free of cost.
Tenders will be opened: Through the NIC portal https://tntenders.gov.in/nicgep/app
CHIEF ENGINEER/MECH/COAL, TANGEDCO/CHENNAI-2
DIPR/1623/Tender/2023 "சோதனை கடந்து சுதந்திரம் அடைந்தோம் சாதனை புரிந்து சரித்திரம் படைப்போம்"

INBRIEF

Single-day rise of 524 COVID cases in India: Health Ministry

India logged 524 new coronavirus cases after a gap of 113 days, while the active cases rose to 3,618, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Sunday. The death toll stood at 5,30,781, the data updated at 8 a.m. stated. While the COVID case tally was recorded at 4.46 crore (4,46,90,492), the national COVID-19 recovery rate has been recorded at 98.8%, the Ministry said. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 4,41,56,093, while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.19%. According to the Ministry website, 220.64 crore doses of COVID vaccine have been administered in the country so far under the nationwide vaccination drive. PTI

Air India passenger held for 'unruly behaviour' on flight

A passenger on board an Air India flight to Mumbai from London was handed over to security personnel upon arrival in Mumbai, for allegedly smoking in the lavatory and unruly behaviour, the airline said on Sunday. The incident, which took place on March 10, has been reported to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Air India said in a statement. The airline said it was extending all cooperation in the ongoing investigation, and added, "Air India follows a zero tolerance policy for any behaviour that compromises the safety and security of passengers and staff." PTI

Islamic State conspiracy case: NIA searches five locations

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has carried out searches at five places in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra as part of its ongoing investigation to unravel a conspiracy hatched by the global terror group Islamic State to expand its activities in India, an official said on Sunday. The searches were held by different teams at the houses of the suspected persons at four places in Seoni (Madhya Pradesh) and one location in Pune, a spokesperson of the agency said. The official said further investigations into the connections of these accused in the spread of Islamic State ideology in India are being continued to unearth the whole conspiracy. PTI

Six dead in car accident on expressway in Maharashtra

Six persons were killed after their car met with an accident on Sunday morning on the Samruddhi Expressway in Buldhana district of Maharashtra, a police official said. The accident took place at 8 a.m. at Shivni Pisa village when the car, with 13 occupants, was on its way from Aurangabad to Shegaon here, Buldhana Superintendent of Police Sarang Awhad said. "The driver of the car lost control of the car, after which the vehicle hit a road barrier and overturned. Six of the car's occupants, comprising a man, four women and a girl, have died. The injured have been shifted to Aurangabad for treatment," the SP said. PTI

More buildings set to achieve net-zero waste

Centre will bring in new norms for all upcoming housing and commercial complexes; States to be directed to incorporate the requirement in building bylaws as part of efforts to end manual scavenging; mechanised sewerage important for achieving Sustainable Development Goals

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

No touch: The government will promote mechanised spades, sensor sticks for garbage clearance. V. RAJU

All upcoming housing societies and commercial complexes in the country will soon have to mandatorily ensure net-zero waste and have their liquid discharge treated, as part of the Union government's push for reforming and modernising the sewage disposal system.

Achieving net-zero waste means reducing, reusing and recovering waste streams (sludge) to convert them to valuable resources so that zero solid waste is sent to landfills.

The Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry will send a directive, likely by March-end, to all State governments to incorporate the net-zero requirement in the building bylaws and ensure implementation, a senior official in the Ministry said.

The Ministry is looking at integrating septic tank design into the bylaws and adherence to standard specifications, geo-tagging all septic tanks and manholes for proper tracking and reducing GST on mechanised cleaning vehicles.

The directives are part of the government's effort to implement the manhole to machine-hole scheme to eradicate manual scavenging.

In her Budget speech for 2023-24, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced that all cities and towns would be enabled for 100% transition of sewers and septic tanks from manhole to machine-hole mode.

Other guidelines

The guidelines include asking urban local bodies such as municipalities to explore the potential of commercial use of processed sludge as fertilizer and empanelling all agencies providing sanitation services in both the organised and unorganised sectors.

Apart from this, the government will review the Indian standards for mechanised cleaning equipment and consider differential tariff rates for residential and commercial de-sludging.

A "Make in India" start-up for promoting low-cost technological solutions such as mechanised spades and sensor sticks for gas detection is being considered.

For proper implementation, the Centre will ask the States to impose a legal penalty if buildings do not adhere to the bylaws and standard operating procedures, the official said.

Towards SDG

Experts believe a mechanised sewage system, coupled with the mandatory zero net waste clause for housing and commercial complexes, was important for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The United Nations SDG 6.3 aims at "halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increase recycling and safe reuse globally" by 2030. India currently generates 72,368 million litres of urban wastewater a day, of which only 28% is treated, show the Ministry data from 2023.

The real estate sector has welcomed the move. The Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI), the apex body of private real estate developers in India, said these changes could be promoted by incentivising urban local bodies to strengthen their sewerage and treatment infrastructure.

"We have encouraged our members to set up solid and liquid waste management units in their projects. Some developers are setting up sewage treatment plants (STPs) within their project premises too," Harsh Vardhan Patodia, president, CREDAI, said.

According to a 2021 Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry report titled "Circular economy in municipal solid and liquid waste", India's economy could be boosted if the sale of treated sewage is institutionalised.

At a conservative estimate, it has the potential to add close to ₹3,285 crore annually.

Railways issues SOP for transporting arms and ammunition by rail, road

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

Communication on the deployment of manpower and movement of the consignment should be done confidentially. REUTERS

With no standard guidelines till now for providing security to transportation of arms and ammunition by train and road, the Railway Ministry has rolled out the standard operating procedure (SOP) to ensure the safety of such sensitive consignments and their escort personnel.

During a review of the cases seeking the deployment of armed manpower from the Railway Protection Force (RPF) and Railway Protection Special Force (RPSF) to escort consignments of arms and ammunition, it was found that there were no standard guidelines for providing security.

"Arms and ammunition of security forces have always been an attraction for the anti-national and anti-social elements to give shape to their nefarious activities. This makes arms and ammunition as well as the security personnel [RPF/RPSF in this case] susceptible to attack by the anti-national/criminal elements during transit... In prevailing security scenario, it is important to provide foolproof security to arms and ammunition," Director-General, RPF, Sanjay Chander, said in a note to all Principal Chief Security Commissioners of the force across Indian Railways.

To protect arms, ammunition and other explosives and prevent these items from falling into the hands of undesirable and unscrupulous elements, it was extremely essential that an appropriate component of armed escort with adequate number of personnel be provided during transit of the consignments, he added.

Adequately armed security escort personnel drawn from the RPF/RPSF should be deployed taking into account the prevailing security scenario on the route of the transportation. Senior officers should conduct a vulnerability analysis by considering all aspects of possible threats.

All communication on the deployment of manpower and movement of the consignment should be done confidentially.

Within three days of each other, Delhi siblings killed in suspected stray dog attacks

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The police were inquiring into the first attack when the younger brother was mauled by the dogs

Two brothers are suspected to have been killed in stray dog attacks in the Vasant Kunj area of Delhi in a span of three days.

The deceased have been identified as Anand, 7, who was found dead on Friday, and Aditya, 5, who died on Sunday after being attacked a day earlier.

According to the Delhi Police, on Friday afternoon, they received information that Anand from Rangpuri Pahadi Basti, a slum in South Delhi, was missing.

A search was launched and around 5 p.m., the child was found dead with multiple injuries, apparently caused by animal bite.

The police found injuries on the boy's face, legs and chest. The body was found in a forest area near his house.

"Inquiry with neighbours revealed that there were many stray dogs inside the forest area which attack goats and pigs," the police said.

However, the incident took another tragic turn when Anand's younger sibling Aditya too was mauled to death by a pack of dogs, the next day, even before the police could complete their investigation into Anand's death.

"Aditya went to relieve himself near the bushes where he was attacked by the dogs. He was declared dead in the hospital," the police said on Sunday.

New in the locality

The mother of the boys, Sushma, was inconsolable. Never in her wildest dream had she thought that such a fate would befall her, when she moved to Delhi eight months ago, from Allahabad, she said.

After moving to the national capital, Ms. Sushma said, she started living with her sister at Rangpuri Pahadi Basti.

She managed to get a job in a nearby beauty parlour and also admitted her children to school.

"My husband is mentally unstable. My sister asked me to come here so that I can give my children a better life. If I had known something like this would happen to my children, I would have never come to Delhi," said the wailing mother while talking to *The Hindu*.

With local political leaders and activists starting to gather outside her tin-shed house, with offers of help, Ms. Sushma says her focus now is on her only surviving child, Ansh, 9.

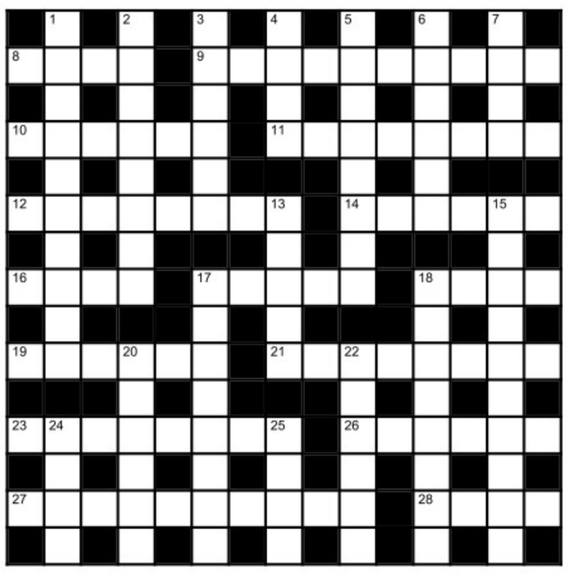
"I don't want anything [from the government]. My children were everything for me. Will you be able to get my children back with money," asked Sushma when a mediaperson asked her if she received any assistance from the government.

TH CROSSWORD + 13811

(set by Incognito)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

8 Soft material wrongly left (4)
9 Australian tirade after inactivity in eating joint (10)
10 River grit is transported (6)
11 MIT car is recycled into sword (8)
12 Vacillated and passed away around the start of race (8)
14 Arrange life insurance in absence of Lucifer? That's silly! (6)
16 West Indian parliamentarian's a coward (4)
17 Taxi in front of Indian Uncle Tom's place (5)
18 Poet from Zanzibar dynasty (4)
19 Finally, salt is spilt around a table top (2,4)
21 Oriental is manacled holding lucky charm (8)
23 Agitated hag loses rubber shoes? (8)
26 College scientist decapitated in burial casket (6)
27 Devilish idol CIA lab manufactured (10)
28 Regretted French road is near end of junk-yard (4)

Down

1 Convicted criminal who repeatedly commits offences, wrongly revisits without a bit of shame, and goes around police department (10)
2 *Enterprise*, perhaps, formed from saint redesigning parish (8)
3 Times queen gets rubber? (6)
4 In the beginning, animals sneak past scorpions and snakes (4)
5 Violent maniac captures American soldier and sorcerer (8)
6 Coaches saint travelling around end of December (6)
7 Civilisation found in Dublin, California (4)
13 Charge short debutante having sex-appeal (5)
15 Sir, van rate is wrongly stated in accounts (10)
17 After Egyptian leader was extracted, ethically demolished government building (4,4)
18 Forest conflagration? Dismiss president first! (4,4)
20 Beam is bent around middle of October by a small organism (6)
22 Look around the French neighbourhood (6)
24 Keen members of Pahlavi dynasty (4)
25 King Charlie 'as turned over in bed (4)

SUDOKU

		1			5		7	
		4					8	
	6		7	9	8		4	
6	4	3		1				7
8				6		5	1	2
	1		9	5	4		2	
	2					4		
	9		2			3		

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

	O	O		B	S		F	A	S					
C	R	O	P		U	K	A	S	E		S	T	U	B
	A		T		D		U		A		P		M	
F	L	Y	I	N	G		C	O	R	R	I	D	O	R
			C		E		E		L		R			
S	P	R	I	N	T	E	R		E	M	E	N	D	S
	I		A				S		S				R	
B	L	I	N	D	L	Y		U	S	I	N	G	U	P
	L				I		C				O		N	
U	S	A	G	E	S			H	A	D	D	O	C	K	S
			R		T		E		A		N			
E	X	C	U	S	E	M	E		N	A	T	I	V	E
	M		M		N		T		G		I		A	
L	A	M	P		E	R	A	S	E		M	U	S	K
	S		Y		D		H		R		E		E	

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

3	9	1	4	2	7	5	8	6
5	8	7	1	9	6	4	3	2
6	2	4	3	5	8	9	1	7
1	3	8	5	7	9	2	6	4
7	4	6	2	8	3	1	5	9
2	5	9	6	1	4	8	7	3
8	7	3	9	4	5	6	2	1
9	1	5	7	6	2	3	4	8
4	6	2	8	3	1	7	9	5

FAITH

Good and bad company

God in His human form, like Rama and Krishna, followed great gurus like Vashishta, Valmiki and Sandipini for the enrichment of life in order to show an example to us. God has also sent various sages and Acharyas time and again for common people to benefit. Sri Manavala Mamunigal was a great Acharya and he was considered to be a reincarnation of Adhisesha. The Acharya has authored Upadesa Rathna Malai for our sakes. In the 69th sloka, he explains the benefits of maintaining conviviality with pious people. In the next sloka, the Acharya dwells in detail over the malevolent effects of endearing with bad elements.

It's as important to seek the advice of pious people as it is to stay away from iniquitous clans. In a basket of fruits, if even one is rotten, it will ruin the other fruits and the foul smell emanating from it will spoil the surrounding atmosphere. Similarly, when a person is caught in the company of bad people, all his good qualities will be subdued and he may turn into an evil-doer. Just as how we are choosy about selecting only the good things we need in our life, we have to be selective about choosing only good people. Sri Pillai Lokachariar says in the Mumukshuppadi 116th sutra that we have to leave all who are against securing the blessings of God.

Sri Prasara Badribhattar Swamy said in a discourse that if we are entrapped with a bad group, our connection with good people, godly deeds and the means to attain salvation will be cut off. If we develop with the bhagavadhas or pious people, we inculcate in ourselves the concept of "Seshathvam" – that we are His subjects and find ways to seek the ultimate Moksha.

LONDON

More coverage disruptions at BBC as staff rally behind Gary Lineker

REUTERS

The BBC's sports coverage faced a second day of disruptions on Sunday as dozens of staff refused to work in solidarity with football host Gary Lineker, who was suspended by the broadcaster after he tweeted criticism of the U.K. government's asylum policy. There were calls for BBC bosses to step down over political bias. AP

PARIS

French Senate approves pensions reform as citizens take to streets

AP

A contentious Bill that would raise the retirement age in France from 62 to 64 got a push forward with the Senate's adoption of the measure amid strikes, protests and uncollected garbage piling higher by the day. The Bill was passed by 195 votes to 112, bringing it another step closer to becoming law. AP

TEHRAN

Iran hands out death sentence for Swedish-Iranian dissident

AFP

Iran's judiciary on Sunday confirmed a death sentence for a Swedish-Iranian dissident for "terrorism", a decision Stockholm denounced as "inhumane". Habib Chaab has been held in Iran since October 2020 after he vanished during a visit to Turkey and was put on trial in Tehran — which does not recognise dual nationality. AFP

NABLUS

Israeli Army shoots dead three Palestinian gunmen in West Bank

AFP

Israeli soldiers shot dead three Palestinian gunmen in a pre-dawn firefight in the occupied West Bank, Israeli and Palestinian sources said on Sunday. The Israeli Army said "gunmen opened fire" at an Army position near the Jit junction, west of Nablus in the northern West Bank, with the soldiers responding with "live fire". AFP

China's new Cabinet hints at Xi's agenda for his third term

Foreign Minister Qin Gang, capping a rapid rise through diplomatic ranks, is promoted as a State Councilor; new Defence Minister General Li Shangfu to push for military modernisation

Ananth Krishnan
BEIJING

China's President Xi Jinping on Sunday unveiled a new Cabinet for his third term, with the line-up of officials indicating that the Chinese leader is likely to exercise even greater control on policy-making over the next five years.

The new Foreign Minister Qin Gang, who was appointed in December, was on Sunday named among the five State Councilors, the third highest-ranking position in the State Council or Cabinet, capping a rapid rise through the diplomatic ranks.

Mr. Qin formerly served as a protocol officer for Mr. Xi and was subsequently sent to Washington for his first ambassadorial posting, a position usually occupied by veteran diplomats.

Succession plan: (from left to right) Qin Gang, Wu Zhenglong and Li Shangfu swear an oath during the NPC in Beijing on Sunday. AFP

In Wang's footsteps

Mr. Qin succeeds Wang Yi as both State Councilor and Foreign Minister. Mr. Wang, at last year's Party congress, was promoted to the Politburo and to head the party's Central Foreign Affairs Commission.

Mr. Qin, as State Councilor, could also likely take over from his predecessor as the Special Representative on the India-China border talks, although Mr. Wang could continue in the post, as he is expected to continue playing an active role in China's diplomacy. Only last week, Mr. Wang was chairing the landmark talks in Beijing between senior officials from Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Also named as a State Councilor was the new Defence Minister, People's Liberation Army (PLA) General Li Shangfu. This appointment was also expected given General Li's promotion to the military's Central Military Commission last year. Observers in Beijing viewed his selection as noteworthy given his background in military modernisation - General Li spent years in the equipment development department and was even sanctioned in 2018 by the then Donald Trump administration over China's defence purchases from Russia, including the S-400 surface-to-air missile system.

At the NPC, Mr. Xi has highlighted the need for China to pursue self-reliance in strategic sectors with urgency, and also warned of the U.S. looking to contain China.

The annual NPC session, which concludes on Monday, last week formally announced Mr. Xi as President for an unprecedented third-term, as well as approved the appointment of Li Qiang, a former chief of staff of Mr. Xi, as the new Premier.

Other appointments

On Sunday, the appointments of four Vice Premiers under Mr. Li, as well as the five State Councilors below them, were announced. Among the new Vice Premiers are another former chief of staff for Mr. Xi, Ding Xuexiang, and He Lifeng, another associate of Mr. Xi who will become the top official in charge of economic policy.

Mr. He's appointment was also expected as he was previously running the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the top planning body. Most other ministerial portfolios saw officials continuing in their posts from Mr. Xi's second term, with an apparent emphasis on continuity in policy and economic stability, including in the key position of governor of the People's Bank of China - the central bank - where Yi Gang continues for another term.

Sunak, Biden and Albanese to meet in San Diego to finalise AUKUS deal

Sriram Lakshman
LONDON

The partnership was announced in September 2021 as part of the strategies of the U.S., the U.K. and Australia to engage more deeply with the Indo-Pacific

U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is heading to San Diego on March 12, 2023 to finalise the AUKUS deal – a trilateral security partnership between Australia, the U.K. and the U.S. that will provide nuclear-powered submarines to Australia.

The partnership was announced in September 2021 as part of these countries' strategies to engage more deeply with the Indo-Pacific, largely to counter Beijing's assertiveness in the region, including what Canberra has described as Beijing's "economic coercion".

"I am travelling to the United States today to launch the next stage of the AUKUS nuclear submarine programme, a project which is binding ties to our closest allies and delivering security, new technology and economic advantage at home," Mr. Sunak said in a statement, prior to his departure.

Back-to-back meetings

Mr. Sunak will have meetings on Sunday and Monday with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and U.S. President Joe Biden.

Mr. Albanese, who has just wrapped up a visit to India, announced on Twitter that he had arrived in the U.S. along with Australia's Navy chief, Mark Hammond.

The White House said Mr. Biden will fly to San Diego on Monday and will hold bilateral talks with Mr. Albanese and Mr. Sunak, in addition to AUKUS discussions.

Currently, only six countries have nuclear-fuelled submarines – India, the U.S., the U.K, France, Russia and China.

Australia, whose fleet consists of six diesel-powered Collins-class submarines, will be the seventh, once the AUKUS fleet is deployed.

Canberra could acquire up to five Virginia-class submarines from the U.S., in the 2030s, under AUKUS, according to a Reuters report.

It would also work with the U.K. to design a new generation of submarines, using American technology. These would likely not be ready until the 2040s.

Integrated Review

Mr. Sunak's trip to the west coast of the U.S. comes as the U.K. prepares to release its updated Integrated Review, a comprehensive statement about its security and foreign policy, which will be released on March 13, 2023.

"The Integrated Review Refresh will address the grave risks from Putin's Russia, the increasingly concerning behaviour of the Chinese Communist Party and hybrid threats to our economy and energy security," Downing Street said on Sunday.

Pak. suspends polls to 37 seats; Imran calls off rallies

Press Trust of India
ISLAMABAD

The Election Commission of Pakistan on Sunday suspended the election scheduled for 37 parliament seats, which fell vacant after the resignation of PTI lawmakers, following orders from different High Courts of the country.

The National Assembly seats fell vacant after the resignation of lawmakers of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) party headed by ousted Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Meanwhile, Mr. Khan, on Sunday, called off his party's planned election rally in Lahore after Punjab's caretaker government banned public gatherings and meetings in the provincial capital.

In a televised address, Mr. Khan on Saturday announced that he will lead an election campaign rally in Lahore on Sunday.

Soon after his announcement, the local administration enforced Section 144 in the provincial capital and banned public gatherings, citing concerns in the wake of a Pakistan Super League (PSL) cricket match in the city, *Dawn* newspaper reported.

Yellen rules out SVB bailout, wants to avoid 'contagion'

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Sunday said the government wanted to avoid financial "contagion" from the implosion of the Silicon Valley Bank but ruled out a bailout of the institution.

"We want to make sure that the troubles that exist at one bank don't create contagion to others that are sound," Ms. Yellen said during an interview with *CBS*.

On Friday, U.S. regulators pulled the plug on Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) – a key lender to U.S. startups since the 1980s – after a run on deposits made it no longer tenable for the medium-sized bank to stay afloat on its own.

Janet Yellen

Nominal gains

Following SVB's disclosure on Wednesday, investors punished the banking sector in total on Thursday, but by Friday, shares in some larger banks posted gains.

Ms. Yellen said on Sunday that the government was working with the U.S. deposit guarantee agency, the FDIC, on a "resolution" of the situation at SVB, where approximately 96% of deposits are not covered by the FDIC's reimbursement guarantee.

"I'm sure they (the FDIC) are considering a wide range of available options that include acquisitions," she said.

Ms. Yellen said reforms made after the 2008 financial crisis meant the government was not considering a bailout for SVB.

"During the financial crisis, there were investors and owners of systemic large banks that were bailed out... and the reforms that have been put in place means that we're not going to do that again," she said.

"But we are concerned about depositors and focused on trying to meet their needs."

Sri Lanka's EC asks Ranil to release funds for elections

Press Trust of India
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Election Commission on Sunday wrote to President Ranil Wickremesinghe requesting him to release the necessary funds to conduct the much-delayed local council elections in the debt-ridden country next month.

The election to appoint new administrations to 340 local councils, which was earlier scheduled for March 9, got postponed to April 25, due to a plethora of reasons linked to the country's current economic crisis.

Chairman of the Election Commission Attorney-at-Law Nimal G. Punchihewa said he has written to President Wickremesinghe, who is also the Finance Minister, urging him to release the necessary funds to hold the polls on the scheduled date.

The move comes after officials in the Treasury told the EC last month that funds for the local body polls have not been disbursed by the Finance Ministry. Sri Lanka's Supreme Court had issued a directive to the Treasury that the conduct of the polls should not be hindered.

ASKUS

Vidya Bala

Q I am a 29-year-old Central Government employee with ₹65,000 salary per month. I have one Term Life of ₹50 lakh, NPS balance around ₹12 lakh, one PLI endowment policy of ₹10 lakh. Apart from this my MF corpus is of ₹1.25 lakh at present with an SIP of ₹2,500 per month. I availed a personal loan of ₹7 lakh a year ago. My marital status is single and total monthly expenses including for family is around ₹45,000 per month. Please guide me to decide whether it is advisable to go for one more Term life or endowment policy. Also, which is better to invest in – ELSS or PPF – and whether my present SIP is sufficient to generate a total corpus of ₹10 lakh in 10 years' time.
BRIJESH KUMAR RANA

A Consider upping your term insurance once you know your commitments post marriage. Make sure it covers all loans and possibly leave a reasonable sum for your family for the next 5-10 years if they lose your income in the event of a mishap. Endowment policies, even if it is from Post Office, do not earn high returns and it is best that you surrender once you cross 5 years. Add that sum to mutual funds. Use simple index mutual funds such Nifty 50 and Nifty 500. We do not know what sort of mutual funds you have invested in. But considering a majority in equity, if the present corpus of ₹1.25 lakh plus the SIP earns 11% IRR, you might reach about ₹9 lakh. So, you definitely need to increase your SIP by another ₹1,000 per month now and increase it even more later.

Q This is regarding my friend. She lost her father 3 months ago. He was the sole bread winner. Now, she is earning ₹80,000 per month and has a corpus of about 10 lakh. Her short-term goal is to save for her marriage which she is anticipating in 2.5-3 years. Please suggest what she can invest in.
SINDHU PRIYA

A Given the short duration, it is best that she invests in deposits in a large bank and less than ₹5 lakh in a small finance bank. If she does not have experience with mutual funds, she may be better off with these alone. Otherwise, she can also start saving in a class of hybrid mutual funds called balanced advantage funds, with a monthly SIP in addition to the deposits. We would not recommend equity funds for the short timeframe she has.

Q I am currently 17 years old and I need suggestions for long-term investing. I look forward to doing some stocks as well as trading and I need help in both mentioned above. I really look forward to hearing from you.
ALFRED SHAJU

A It is good to know that you want to learn how to manage your money early on in life. But make sure you do it slowly and steadily and taking small steps at a time. Directly doing trading may sound very fancy, but it is not the right choice for beginners in our view. You can start investing small sums in simple and good products like PPF and bank deposits. You can then learn a little more about money and investing by reading. You can consider reading books such as 'Let's Talk Money' by Monika Halan and You can be rich too: With Goal Based Investing (P.V. Subramanyam and M. Pattabiraman) to know the basics of money and financial planning. You can go to mutual fund websites to know the basics of mutual funds. Once you understand this a bit, you can then try to read about how stock markets work and how to understand a company's financials and business prospects.
Regularly read business news through business newspapers or business news websites. Importantly, do not get too swayed by the 'easy money' talk that you will hear all around you, especially in social media. Listen to audios or videos about stock markets, but remember, like any other journey, the financial journey also takes time to travel.
(The writer is co-founder, PrimeInvestor.in)

Send queries on personal finance and investing to the moneywise@thehindu.co.in ID. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.

Professional investment advice: Who can give it?

Taking investment advice from people who are unregulated or are not professionally qualified has its own pitfalls

LICENCE TO ADVISE

Joydeep Sen

When you see the question in the headline, who can give professional advice, your instant reaction would be, a professional.

It sounds obvious. Such as, who can give medical advice: a doctor; who can handle high-voltage electricity lines: a professional electrician.

However, when it comes to investment advice, people tend to forget this basic truth. This is due to the apparent attractiveness of the proposition, the potentially superior returns from the investments in question. However, in the process, you are risking your hard-earned money.

As per SEBI regulation, 'investment advice' is an advice relating to investing in, purchasing, selling or otherwise dealing in securities or investment products, and advice on investment portfolio containing securities or investment products, whether written, oral or through any other means of communication for the benefit of the client and shall include financial planning.

Again, as per SEBI, the investment advice given through newspaper, magazines, any electronic or broadcasting or telecommunication medium, which is widely available to the public, shall not be considered as investment advice for the purpose of Investment Advisor regulations. However, investment advisers who make public appearance or make recommendations or offer an opinion concerning securities or public offers through public media, are required to comply with the relevant provisions of SEBI (Research Analysts) Regulations.

> One has to distinguish between celebrities recommending a brand of cloth or cosmetics, and recommending investments

What we derive from this SEBI definition is that when something is disseminated through formal media, there is a filtering and there is some level of accountability. However, when something is communicated through social media only, there is no accountability. Views may go wrong. Views of a seasoned, SEBI-registered investment professional also may go wrong.

Prescribed process

However, if the person is professionally qualified and has the requisite permission from the regulator, he/she has to follow the prescribed process and due diligence, and is subject to audit on the process followed. In social media, anybody and everybody can express views and give recommendations.

> Investment Advisers have to pass the requisite exams and have commensurate background to get the licence

In today's age of internet and free flow of information and opinions, we have the phenomenon of social media influencers.

Here, you have to distinguish between celebrities recommending a brand of cloth or cosmetics, and recommending investments.

Matter of choice

The distinction is, clothes or cosmetics is a matter of choice, and it is your choice to be influenced by a celebrity. You may argue that when you are investing your own money, it is your choice where to invest and whom to be influenced by. True. But think of it: when you are not well, do you take medicines recommended by a social media influencer or a doctor? That also is your choice.

Cases are surfacing, which are referred to as 'pump and dump.'

A person or a group of people makes propaganda on the social media, the market price of the stock is jacked up, and they sell off at a profit.

If a SEBI-registered intermediary does this, there will be a SEBI audit and the licence is liable to be cancelled. However, when a non-SEBI-licensed person or entity does this, they are penalised, but as per civil laws. There is no licence to be cancelled. The question that arises here is, who is a SEBI-authorised person in this regard?

A person who is giving an opinion about a stock in public through a report, or opinion communicated through social media, has to be a research analyst. There is an exam called NISM Series XV which has to be cleared, and she/he has to register with SEBI as a research analyst.

For advising on portfolio construction, there are Investment Advisers (IAs). IAs have to pass the requisite exams and have commensurate background to get the licence.

Risk profiling

IAs have to do risk profiling of clients and document the basis or rationale of why they are recommending, what they are recommending. For investments through Mutual Funds and incidental advice, there are Mutual Fund Distributors (MFDs).

There is an exam called NISM Series VA which has to be cleared. MFDs also have to do client risk profiling.

To conclude, when you are being influenced by a film or other celebrity, it should rather be about the acting or other skills, than about investing your hard-earned money.

(The writer is a corporate trainer and author)

Partial Vision?

COVERNOTE

Cover for cataract surgery, which is a part of a health insurance policy, appears to be a grey area for the insured. Insurers need to make themselves clear about sub-limits for the procedure

K. Nitya Kalyani

Long ago a health insurance company CEO told me, "every Indian needs health insurance." I will add, 'and cataract surgery cover.'

This is usually part of any hospitalisation cover in India, so let us look at some gritty points I encountered when a family member underwent cataract surgery.

It was a network hospital of his insurer, so he presented his insurance card and the hospital obtained a pre-approval for ₹25,000. In effect the insurer told the hospital, this is our guy and we will pay for this surgery.

Almost all hospitalisation policies have sub limits for cataract surgery but this policy was silent on it. So, 'will the insurer pay the whole bill?' was the next question.

Deposit for surgery

This hospital did not ask for any deposit before surgery, though I hear others do.

But at the time of discharge, they asked for a deposit of ₹68,000, the full cost of the surgery. Never mind the pre-approval, they said, once the insurance company pays us, we will refund it to you.

"So, cashless is meaningless?", the patient asked me with irritation. I called the insurer with the same question and asked what the sub-limit was on cataract surgery under this policy (sum insured of ₹10 lakh).

The company rep said sub-limits are negotiated with each network hospital individually and ARE NOT shared with the insured!

(My own hospitalisation policy, from a different company states a flat limit of ₹50,000 regardless of sum insured. I can enhance it for a small premium and intend to do that. I did appreciate the transparency even if the coverage was lower).

Cashless treatment?

Back to the current case. "What about cashless?", I insisted. He sidestepped that question and said reassuringly that once the hospital sends the claim, approval would be within an hour.

The hospital said they would send the claim the same afternoon and the doctor, on request, kindly agreed to not insist on payment until the review scheduled for the next day.

I say 'kindly' because the hospital could have ended up caught between two strangers and, having provided the service, been chasing up bills.

The insured was aghast that he too may well have been chasing up the hospital for a refund. Also, he had options of more sophisticated lenses but the opaqueness of his policy limited his vision. Much like cataract!

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history.)

Personal Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	Loan amount 1 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	**Interest Rate (%)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**Processing fee**
HDFC Bank	10.50 onwards	10,747 onwards	2,149 onwards	Up to Rs 4,999
Citi Bank	10.75 onwardS	10,809 onwards	2,162 onwards	Up to 3%
Tata Capital	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 3%
ICICI Bank	10.75 onwards	10,809 onwards	2,162 onwards	Up to 2.50%
Bank of Baroda	10.90-18.25	10,846-12,765	2,169-2,553	Up to 2% (Min Rs 1,000 and Max Rs 10,000)
State Bank of India	11.00-15.00	10,871-11,895	2,174-2,379	Up to 1.50% (Rs 1,000-Rs 15,000)
Axis Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards	Up to 2%
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 3%
Bank of India	10.35-14.85	10,710-11,856	2,142-2,371	Up to 1% (Max Rs 5,000)
Canara Bank	11.75-16.25	11,059-12,226	2,212-2,445	Up to 1%
Punjab National Bank	10.40-16.95	10,772-12,413	2,144-2,483	Up to 1%
HSBC Bank	9.75-16.00	10,562-12,159	2,112-2,432	Up to 2%
Federal Bank	11.49-14.49	10,994-11,762	2,199-2,352	Up to 3%
Union Bank of India	11.40-15.50	10,971-12,027	2,194-2,405	Up to 1% (Max Rs 7,500)
Bajaj Finserv	11.00 onwards	10,871 onwards	2,174 onwards	Upto 3.93%
Punjab & Sind Bank	11.15-12.75	10,909-11,313	2,182-2,263	Up to 1%
South Indian Bank	12.60-20.35	11,274-13,345	2,255-2,669	Up to 2%
UCO Bank	11.05-14.05	10,884-11,647	2,177-2,329	Up to 1%
IDFC First Bank	10.49 onwards	10,809 onwards	2,162 onwards	Up to 3.50%
Bank of Maharashtra	9.50-12.80	10,501-11,325	2,100-2,265	Up to 1%
Karnataka Bank	13.94	11,619	2,324	Up to 2% of loan amount (Min. Rs 2,500 & Max. Rs 8,500)
IndusInd Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards	Up to 3%

Paisabazaar.com

Car Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	**Interest Rate (%)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**Processing fee**
Union Bank of India	8.70 - 10.50	10,307 - 10,747	NIL
Bank of Baroda	8.70 - 12.20	10,307 - 11,173	Nil upto 31st March 2023
Canara Bank	9.15 - 11.95	10,416 - 11,110	waived off till 31st March 2023
Bank of India	8.85 - 10.85	10,343 - 10,834	NIL
UCO Bank	9.10 - 10.65	10,403 - 10,784	1% (Up to Rs 1,500)
State Bank of India	8.60 - 9.45	10,282 - 10,489	NIL
IDBI Bank	8.75 - 9.90	10,319 - 10,599	Rs 2,500
Bank of Maharashtra*	8.90 - 13.00	10,355 - 11,377	NIL
Indian Overseas Bank**	8.85 onwards	10,343 onwards	100% waiver till 31st March 2023
ICICI Bank	8.75 onwards	10,319 onwards	Rs 999 - Rs 9,000
HDFC Bank	8.75 onwards	10,319 onwards	0.50% (Rs 3,500 - Rs 8,000)
Karnataka Bank	9.08 - 11.50	10,399 - 10,996	0.60% (Rs 3,000 - Rs 11,000)
Federal Bank	11.00	10,871	Rs 2,000 - Rs 4,500
Indian Bank	8.60 - 9.70	10,282 - 10,550	0.50% (Max. Rs 10,000)
South Indian Bank	11.40 - 12.85	10,971 - 11,338	1% (Max: Rs 10,000)
City Union Bank	14.25 - 14.75	11,699 - 11,829	1.25% (Min: Rs 1,000)

*0.25% interest rate concession for existing housing loan borrowers and corporate salary account holders
**0.50% interest rate concession to borrowers with credit scores of 750 and above. Interest rate concession of 0.20% to borrowers for financing Electric 4 Wheelers. 0.20% concession to existing Housing Loan Borrowers*

Rates and charges as on March 7 **Source: Paisabazaar.com**

IN HIS ELEMENT

Kohli is a class player and didn't give us a chance, says Carey

Australia stumper-batter Alex Carey praised Virat Kohli for his incredible century in Ahmedabad. "He's a class player and he didn't really give us a chance. We were able to contain him as much as we could and try to take wickets around him. Anytime you come to India and Virat's next in or batting, you know it's going to be noisy."

TURNING THE TABLES

Mathews' century raises Sri Lankan hopes of a win

Angelo Mathews' 115 kept Sri Lanka alive in the first Test against New Zealand in Christchurch on Sunday. Set a target of 285, New Zealand was 28 for one.
The scores: Sri Lanka 355 & 302 in 105.3 overs (Angelo Mathews 115, Blair Tickner 4/100) vs New Zealand 373 & 28/1 in 17 overs.

OUT OF ACTION

South Africa spinner Maharaj faces lengthy lay-off after freak injury

South Africa left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj faces a lengthy period out after suffering a freak injury during South Africa's 284-run win over the West Indies in the second Test in Johannesburg on Saturday. Cricket South Africa announced that Maharaj "has a complete rupture of his left Achilles tendon."

TIGERS ROAR

Mehidy, Najmul help Bangladesh claim T20 series win over England

Mehidy Hasan (4/12 & 20) and Najmul (46 n.o.) helped Bangladesh stun England and seal the three-match T20I series 2-0 on Sunday.
The scores: England 117 in 20 overs (Duckett 28, Salt 25, Mehidy 4/12) lost to Bangladesh 120/6 in 18.5 overs (Najmul 46 n.o., Archer 3/13).

Dominant Kohli ends a long Test century drought

Axar forges a 162-run stand off just 216 balls with the former skipper for the seventh wicket to make sure the home side takes the lead; injured Shreyas fails to come out to bat, so also Khawaja

AUSTRALIA IN INDIA

Shayan Acharya
AHMEDABAD

The celebrations were subdued. Virat Kohli took off his helmet, raised the bat and kissed the wedding ring dangling from a chain around his neck after he flicked a Nathan Lyon delivery for a single and reached his 28th Test century (186, 364b, 15x4) – the first since November 23, 2019.

As the crowd chanted his name at the Narendra Modi Stadium throughout on Sunday, Kohli flexed his muscles to guide India to 571 in the first innings.

So close to a double

Though he would be disappointed to have missed out on a double-century, by just 14 runs, after holing out to Marnus Labuschagne at deep mid-wicket off Todd Murphy, Kohli dominated the fourth day, putting India in firm control of the game.

It took the erstwhile India captain 1,205 days to reach a ton since scoring his last against Bangladesh in the pink-ball Test in Kolkata.

Coming into the series-deciding fourth Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with scores of 12, 44, 20, 22 and 13, Kohli, who felt slightly feverish after the third day, put his head down, batted for 516 minutes and went on to break the century-jinx in 241 balls.

He forged a 162-run stand off just 216 balls with Axar Patel (79, 113b, 5x4, 4x6) for the seventh wicket to make sure the home side took the much-needed lead.

Axar scored 84 and 74 in the first two Tests, and coming in at a time when Kohli needed a partnership, he complemented the batting ace with five fours and four sixes.

Kohli held fort, while Axar accelerated the strike, in an indication that the lead could extend up to 150 or 160.

However, he dragged a Mitchell Starc delivery onto his stumps and soon after his dismissal, India lost R. Ashwin and Umesh Yadav in quick succession.

Resuming the day at 289 for three, India scored 73 runs for the loss of a wicket in the first session as Ravindra Jadeja chipped to Usman Khawaja at mid-on off Murphy after adding 64 with Kohli.

Bharat does his bit

Coming in for Shreyas Iyer, who complained of lower-back pain and did not bat, K.S. Bharat took time to settle, but as the day progressed, he rotated the strike with Kohli and also hit Cameron Green for successive sixes and cut him for four to bring up 21 runs in an over.

That paved the way for the 84-run stand before he fell short of a maiden Test fifty, caught at short-leg off Lyon. But with Kohli and Axar around, India did not lose the plot.

Australia had six overs before stumps and ended at three for no loss, trailing by 88 runs. Regular opener Khawaja jarred his knee while fielding, leading to Travis Head being joined by night-watchman Matthew Kuhnemann.

The latter was dropped by Bharat off Ashwin.

Imperious: Kohli notched up his 28th Test century. VIJAY SONEJI

Joining hands: Axar turned out to be the ideal foil to as they took the hosts to safety. VIJAY SONEJI

Kohli's collection of 100s

The 186 against Australia in Ahmedabad on Sunday was Kohli's 75th International hundred

	TESTS	ODIs	T20Is
Inns	183	262	107
100s	28	46	1

IN TESTS

	Inns	100s
vs. Australia	42	8
vs. Sri Lanka	18	5
vs. England	50	5
vs. New Zealand	21	3
vs. South Africa	24	3
vs. Bangladesh	9	2
vs. West Indies	19	2

- Kohli's previous Test century had come against Bangladesh at Eden Gardens in November 2019
- His three-figure knocks against the Aussies:

116 (Adelaide, 2012)
107 (Chennai, 2013)
115 (Adelaide, 2014)
141 (Adelaide, 2014)
169 (Melbourne, 2014)
147 (Sydney, 2015)
123 (Perth, 2018)
186 (Ahmedabad, 2023)

SCOREBOARD

AUSTRALIA — 1ST INNINGS

480 in 167.2 overs

INDIA — 1ST INNINGS

Rohit Sharma c Labuschagne b Kuhnemann 35 *(58b, 3x4, 1x6)*, Shubman Gill lbw b Lyon 128 *(235b, 12x4, 1x6)*, Cheteshwar Pujara lbw b Murphy 42 *(121b, 3x4)*, Virat Kohli c Labuschagne b Murphy 186 *(364b, 15x4)*, Ravindra Jadeja c Khawaja b Murphy 28 *(84b, 2x4, 1x6)*, K.S. Bharat c Handscomb b Lyon 44 *(88b, 2x4, 3x6)*, Axar Patel b Starc 79 *(113b, 5x4, 4x6)*, R. Ashwin c Kuhnemann b Lyon 7 *(12b, 1x4)*, Umesh Yadav run out 0 *(0b)*, Mohammed Shami (not out) 0 *(2b)*, Shreyas Iyer absent hurt; Extras (b-14, lb-4, nb-4): 22; Total (in 178.5 overs): 571.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-74 (Rohit, 20.6 overs), 2-187 (Pujara, 61.6), 3-245 (Gill, 78.4), 4-309 (Jadeja, 106.6), 5-393 (Bharat, 136.4), 6-555 (Axar, 172.3), 7-568 (Ashwin, 175.6), 8-569 (Umesh, 176.3), 9-571 (Kohli, 178.5).

AUSTRALIA BOWLING

Starc 22-3-97-1, Green 18-1-90-0, Lyon 65-9-151-3, Kuhnemann 25-3-94-1, Murphy 45.5-10-113-3, Head 3-0-8-0.

AUSTRALIA — 2ND INNINGS

Matthew Kuhnemann (batting) 0 *(18b)*, Travis Head (batting) 3 *(18b)*; Total (for no loss in six overs): 3.

INDIA BOWLING

Ashwin 3-2-1-0, Jadeja 2-1-1-0, Shami 1-0-1-0.

Harmanpreet, Sciver-Brunt seal the chase after Saika shines again

WPL

P.K. Ajith Kumar
MUMBAI

How can you stop this Mumbai side? Four MI matches later, none of its rivals in the Women's Premier League has an answer. In front of a near full house at the Brabourne Stadium on Sunday, with the fans cheering the team right through, it crushed UP Warriorz by eight wickets.

After restricting Warriorz to 159 for six, MI romped home in the 18th over with skipper Harmanpreet Kaur leading the charge (53 not out, 33b, 9x4, 1x6).

It was Harmanpreet's unbroken third-wicket stand of 106 with Nat Sciver-Brunt (45 not out, 31b, 6x4, 1x6) that destroyed Warriorz's hopes which had soared after the MI openers Yastika Bhatia (42, 27b, 8x4, 1x6) and Hayley Mathews (12, 17b, 2x4) left at the same total of 58.

Earlier, MI failed to bowl out an opposition for the first time, but that didn't matter in the end. When the third-wicket partnership between Warriorz captain Alyssa Healy (58, 46b, 7x4, 1x6) and Tahlia McGrath (50, 37b, 9x4) was looking to take the team into the death overs, MI struck back through left-arm spinner Saika Ishaque. The Purple Cap holder removed the Aussies in the same over. She trapped Healy on the reverse sweep and a ball later had McGrath stumped with a flighted delivery.

Saika had taken the first wicket, too, in the second over of the day – Devika Vaidya fell lbw while trying to sweep a fuller, quicker delivery.

Kiran Navgire, after hitting 10 in two balls off Amelia Kerr, perished to the next, top-edging a slog-sweep to 'keeper Yastika, who had to wait an eternity for the ball to land in her big gloves. Warriorz needed to rebuild and Healy did that in the company of McGrath through their 82-run association.

That, however, wasn't enough to stop Mumbai.

On the go: Harmanpreet played a captain's knock. SPORTZPICS/WPL

SCOREBOARD

UP WARRIORZ

Alyssa Healy lbw b Saika 58 *(46b, 7x4, 1x6)*, Devika Vaidya lbw b Saika 6 *(5b, 1x4)*, Kiran Navgire c Yastika b Kerr 17 *(14b, 2x4, 1x6)*, Tahlia McGrath st. Yastika b Saika 50 *(37b, 9x4)*, Simran Shaikh (not out) 9 *(8b)*, Sophie Ecclestone c Sciver-Brunt b Matthews 1 *(4b)*, Deepti Sharma st. Yastika b Kerr 7 *(6b, 1x4)*, Shweta Sehrawat (not out) 2 *(2b)*; Extras (lb-5, w-2, nb-2): 9; Total (for six wkts. in 20 overs): 159.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-8 (Devika, 1.6 overs), 2-58 (Kiran, 6.4), 3-140 (Healy, 16.3), 4-141 (McGrath, 16.5), 5-146 (Ecclestone, 17.6), 6-156 (Deepti, 19.3).

MUMBAI INDIANS BOWLING

Sciver-Brunt 3-0-19-0, Saika 4-0-33-3, Wong 4-0-29-0, Kerr 4-0-33-2, Matthews 4-0-27-1, Jintimani 1-0-13-0.

MUMBAI INDIANS

Hayley Matthews c & b Ecclestone 12 *(17b, 2x4)*, Yastika Bhatia c Simran b Rajeshwari 42 *(27b, 8x4, 1x6)*, Nat Sciver-Brunt (not out) 45 *(31b, 6x4, 1x6)*, Harmanpreet Kaur (not out) 53 *(33b, 9x4, 1x6)*; Extras (b-3, lb-1, w-5, nb-3): 12; Total (for two wkts. in 17.3 overs): 164.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-58 (Yastika, 6.5), 2-58 (Matthews, 7.2).

UP WARRIORZ BOWLING

Rajeshwari 4-0-33-1, Shabnim 3.3-0-34-0, Deepti 3-0-30-0, Anjali 2-0-14-0, Ecclestone 4-0-30-1, McGrath 1-0-19-0.

Toss: UP Warriorz.

PoM: Harmanpreet.

Monday's match: Capitals vs. Royal Challengers, 7.30 p.m.

Bengaluru FC shoots out a fighting Mumbai City in engrossing contest

ISL-9

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

Bengaluru FC edged Mumbai City FC 9-8 on penalties at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium on Sunday to enter the Indian Super League final.

With the aggregate tied 2-2, Mehtab Singh's was the first missed spot-kick of a high-quality shoot-out. Sandesh Jhingan buried the ball into the right bottom corner to send BFC through to its third final.

The result was cruel for MCFC goalkeeper Phurba Lachenpa, who made no less than four first-rate saves, including one off Roy Krishna's head in the first half of extra-time.

Reward for hard work

But the evening's result was just reward for the tireless Javi Hernandez, BFC's best player on the pitch.

MCFC could have opened the scoring in the 10th minute when BFC custodian Gurpreet Singh Sandhu brought down Jorge Pereyra Diaz clumsily. But Greg Stewart let go of the opportunity with a poor spot-kick.

Minutes later, the visitors paid the price as Hernandez sent BFC into the lead. N. Sivasakthi hoodwinked Mehtab with a smart turn on the left flank and curled in a fine cross that was headed home by Hernandez.

MCFC, though, equalised on the half-hour mark through Bipin Singh, who bundled in the ball from close range after Gurpreet had thwarted Rowllin Borges' first attempt. D. Vignesh hit the bar from long for MCFC and Hernandez drew a fine save from Lachenpa.

After the break, the two goalkeepers continued to be busy; Lachenpa had to deny Hernandez again before Gurpreet palmed away a header from Bipin. But Mehtab, on 66 minutes, levelled the tie on aggregate, heading in a corner past Gurpreet at the near post.

Moments later, Hernandez finally seemed to have Lachenpa's measure as he eyed the most acute of angles, only for the MCFC 'keeper to save it with his fingertips. Rahul Bheke could have clinched it for MCFC in the dying minutes of regulation time but his glancing header went just wide.

Extra-time was manic, with Pereyra Diaz missing two gilt-edged chances and Mourtada Fall nearly scoring an own goal for MCFC. In the end, it was BFC which had the last laugh.

The result:
Bengaluru FC 1 (Hernandez 22) lost to Mumbai City FC 2 (Bipin 30, Mehtab 66). Aggregate 2-2; BFC won 9-8 on penalties.

Singh is king: Gurpreet rose to the occasion for Bengaluru FC in the shootout. K. MURALI KUMAR

INBRIEF

Gokulam downs Sreenidi, finishes third in I-League

Gokulam Kerala defeated Sreenidi Deccan by a lone goal in Kozhikode on Sunday and finished third in the I-League, behind champion RoundGlass Punjab FC and Sreenidi. Gokulam's Spanish forward Sergio Mendigutxia scored the winner off a penalty in the 50th minute.

Sharath and Sathiyan crash out in first round in Singapore

A. Sharath Kamal and G. Sathiyan lost in the Singapore Smash 2023 first round on Saturday. Sharath went down to 16-year-old Quek Izaac of Singapore 11-4, 11-6, 12-10 while, Sathiyan was beaten by Jang Woojin of South Korea 11-6, 7-11, 15-17, 11-6, 11-5.

India eliminated from AFC U-20 Asian Cup Qualifiers

India played out a 1-1 draw with hosts Vietnam and was knocked out of contention for the second round of the AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers due to an inferior goal difference in Viet Tri City, Vietnam, on Saturday. Both teams finished on seven points.

The result: Vietnam 1 (Tran Nhat Lan 45+2) drew with India 1 (Babina Devi 12).

Top seeds Alcaraz, Swiatek start strong at Indian Wells

Top seeds Carlos Alcaraz and Iga Swiatek raced into the third round of the Indian Wells WTA and ATP Masters 1000 on Saturday.

Important results (second round): Men: Carlos Alcaraz bt Thanasi Kokkinakis 6-3, 6-3; Felix Auger-Aliassime bt Pedro Martínez 7-6(5), 6-4; Jannik Sinner bt Richard Gasquet 6-3, 7-6(2); Stan Wawrinka bt Kecmanovic 7-6(8), 6-4.

Women: Iga Swaitek bt Claire Liu 6-0, 6-1; Emma Raducanu bt Magda Linette 7-6(3), 6-2; Sorana Cirstea bt Madison Keys 6-1, retd.; Caroline Garcia bt Dalma Gálfi 6-1, 6-7(4), 6-4; Ons Jabeur bt Magdalena Frech 4-6, 6-4, 6-1; Karolína Muchová bt Victoria Azarenka 7-6(1), 6-3.

LIVE TELECAST

India vs Australia: 4th Test, day 5, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 9.30 a.m.

WPL: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 7.30 p.m.

ISL: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 7.30 p.m.

I-League: Eurosport (SD & HD), 8 p.m.

Serie A: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 1.15 a.m. (Tuesday)

LaLiga: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 1.30 a.m. (Tuesday)

One for the ages as India outguns Australia in nine-goal drama

The Indians last got the better of the Aussies in a major competition in 1996; the hosts lead 4-1 at half-time before the visitors claw back to make a match of it; Harmanpreet makes the penalty corners count, scoring thrice

FIH PRO LEAGUE

Uthra Ganesan
ROURKELA

Seventeen minutes of absolute brilliance and assertive control, wedged between overall superiority and nervous moments, saw India register its second win in as many games of the FIH Pro League here on Sunday. It nudged past Australia 5-4 in a nine-goal thriller that consigned the opponent to its second straight defeat.

According to FIH records, India last beat Australia in a major competition in 1996 in the Champions Trophy.

Captain Harmanpreet Singh's hat-trick set the tone for the Indians though the hosts trailed by a goal scored by Joshua Beltz in the third minute.

The Australians finally showed glimpses of old, taking charge of the attack and being a lot more confident in their forays.

Beltz drew first blood off a counter, the constant pressing piling on the pressure for the Indian defence.

Scorcher: Harmanpreet's penalty corner strike in the 56th minute swung it India's way. TWITTER@THEHOCKEYINDIA

The youngsters in the Indian side appeared shaky, trying to come to terms with the speedy opponents and taking time to settle down. India earned four consecutive penalty corners but couldn't make them count. However, Harmanpreet's low flick to the left pulled the team level and steadied nerves. A minute later, Abhishek was tripped, another PC earned and another scored. Just like that, the momentum changed at the end of the first quarter and the next 15 minutes were pure adrenaline for the 20,000 fans in the stands.

A push on Vishnukant Singh led to Jugraj Singh converting the resultant penalty stroke three minutes on resumption.

Incredible goal

Selvam Karthi's dodge past Jake Harvie and strike into the net from the top of the circle in the 26th minute was one for the ages. At half-time, India was ahead 4-1. The Aussies had no idea what hit them, but regrouped after the break.

The visitors came back stronger, pushing hard, punishing India for taking the pressure off the ball. Australia also overcame its tentativeness, opened up space across the width of the turf, built pressure and slowly advanced.

The Indian defence, strong till then, became inconsistent although goalkeeper Pawan Malik again came up with several stellar saves to keep the host in front. Lack of discipline seemed to creep in again and Australia clawed back, goal by goal. At 4-3, with a shootout looming, India picked up pace all of a sudden, earned a PC and Harmanpreet got his third.

A desperate Australia threw everything, took off the goalkeeper and camped in the Indian half but could get only one of the two goals it needed to stretch the game. It wasn't to be.

The result: India 5 (Harmanpreet 14, 15 & 56, Jugraj 18, Karthi 26) bt Australia 4 (Beltz 3, Willott 43, Staines 53, Zelewski 57).

AIFF names Sabir Pasha as Technical Director

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

The All India Football Association (AIFF) has appointed Syed Sabir Pasha as the Technical Director of the Indian National teams. While Pasha has informally accepted the offer, he told *The Hindu* on Sunday that he would take up the job once his employer Indian Bank gives permission.

"It is a big role where I have to develop the coaches of the Indian National teams, including the senior men's and age-group squads, coordinate with them, devise programs, and monitor them. I will also play a role in the appointment of selectors. It's a challenging and more active role," said Pasha, who was the assistant coach of Chennaiyin FC for the last seven years in the Indian Super League.

The 50-year-old thanked Indian Bank for being a pillar of support during his playing career and as a coach. "I am waiting for the bank's official letter. It is a one-year contract and I will be based in New Delhi," said Pasha.

Sumit sets a new mark in boys' 2000m steeplechase

ATHLETICS

Sports Bureau

Haryana's Sumit Rathee (5:51.94s) broke the boys' 2,000m steeplechase meet record in the 18th National Youth athletics championships in Udupi on Sunday.

The previous record was held by Noor Hasan, who set a timing of 5:54.37s in 2018.

In the boys' 200m, Abhay Singh equalled the meet record set by Shanmuga Srinivas (21.87s) set in 2019. Haryana emerged as the overall champion.

The results (winners only): Boys: 10,000m race walk: Babendra Singh (UTk), 43:34.25; **800m:** Himanshu Rathi (U.P.) 1:53.61; **400m hurdles:** H. Bapi (Odi) 51.95; **200m:** Abhay Singh (M.P.) 21.87; **2,000m steeplechase:** Sumit Rathee (Har) 5:51.94; **hammer throw:** Narpat Singh (Raj) 66.22m; **triple jump:** K. Yuvaraj (TN) 14.26; **javelin:** Arjun (Del) 68.9; **high jump:** Sarthak Shivaji (Mah), 1.97.

Girls: 800m: Heena (Har) 2:16.81s; **400m hurdles:** M. Jyothika (Ker) 1:04.31; **200m:** Khushi Sadana (Mah) 24.58; 2,000m steeplechase: C. Keerthana (TS) 7:22.55; **javelin:** Navreet Kaur (Pun) 47.09m; **heptathlon:** Mubassina Mohammed (L'dweep) 4874 points.

Best athletes: Boys: Sandip Vinod (Mah); **girls:** Rezona Mallick Heena (WB).

Champion States: Boys: Uttar Pradesh; **girls:** Haryana.

Overall champion: Haryana.

Home support key for ATK MB as it hopes to breach HFC's defence

ISL-9

Amitabha Das Sharma
KOLKATA

ATK Mohun Bagan (ATK MB) will count on a boisterous home support to be a catalyst when it meets holder Hyderabad FC (HFC) in the second leg of its Indian Super League semifinal, at the Salt Lake Stadium, on Monday.

The host would be looking to make the most of the slight advantage it gained by holding Hyderabad to a goalless draw while visiting it in the first-leg of the semifinal action.

A win for either of the two opponents will secure a final spot provided a result is secured in the regulation time (90 minutes).

Otherwise, extra-time and penalty shoot-outs will be needed to decide the winner.

Closely-knit unit: ATK MB's players will look to carry the momentum from the knock-outs against HFC. ANI

Formidable defences

The contest in all likelihood will be keenly fought as two of the most formidable defences in the tournament take guard. This was very much the reason why the first-leg encounter ended goalless.

After a mediocre performance in the second phase of the league stage, ATK Mohun Bagan appears to have turned the corner in the play-offs.

The Mariners managed to keep a clean sheet in their last three games and apart from that also enjoy the record of winning eight out of 11 games at home.

Fantastic away record

This is contrasted against the fantastic away record of Hyderabad FC.

The visitor has the second-best away record this season.

The defending champion has lost just two out of ten games on the road and has kept clean sheets in three out of their last four games.

This makes for an interesting clash even though ATKMB will be taking heart from the 1-0 win it recorded against the same opponent at home in the first phase of the league.

No one saw that coming, Lanning praises Shafali

WPL

P.K. Ajith Kumar
MUMBAI

It is not every night that Ashleigh Gardner goes for 22 runs in an over. But it is not every night that the world's No. 1 all-rounder comes across someone who hits the ball as cleanly as Shafali Verma was on Saturday.

There is still plenty of cricket to be played in the inaugural Women's Premier League, but Shafali's innings (76 not out, 28b, 10x4, 5x6) for Delhi Capitals against Gujarat Giants at Navi Mumbai's D.Y. Patil Stadium will remain one of the highlights of the tournament. It was T20 batting at its best.

Ever since the world first saw her at the Women's T20 Challenge – the precursor to the WPL – as a 15-year-old on a summer evening in Jaipur four years ago, she has often shown she is a special talent. Even by her high standards, this knock was special.

Shafali in action. SPORTZPICS/WPL

> I loved standing at the other end and watching her doing her thing. It was a lot of fun out there.
> MEG LANNING

Delhi Capitals captain and Shafali's opening partner Meg Lanning had the best seat in the house. "I loved standing at the other end and watching her doing her thing," Lanning said. "It was a lot of fun out there. (We were chasing a small total and) we wanted to play our natural games. But I didn't see that coming from Shafali. I don't think anyone did. I just asked her to keep going."

Shafali acknowledged she benefitted from batting alongside one of the finest batters of all time in the women's game. "I would like to thank her for her advice," she said. "In the last game, I got out playing the flick. So I tried to play straight."

Shafali and Lanning have now established themselves as the best opening pair of the tournament, with stands of 162, 67, 8 and 107 (unbroken). Shafali will have gained a lot from their partnership by the time the tournament is over. That is one of the ways the WPL is going to help Indian women's cricket.

Arsenal purrs along smoothly past Fulham

Nodding home: Martinelli heads in Arsenal's second. REUTERS

EURO LEAGUES

Agencies
LONDON

First half strikes from Gabriel Magalhaes, Gabriel Martinelli and Martin Odegaard against Fulham ensured that Arsenal maintained its five-point lead over champion Manchester City, in the Premier League on Sunday.

Earlier on Saturday, Manchester City kept up the pressure on Arsenal after Erling Haaland converted a second-half penalty to secure a 1-0 win over Crystal Palace.

Khvicha Kvaratskhelia helped move Napoli another step closer to a first Serie A title in more than three decades with a wonder goal in Saturday's 2-0 win over Atalanta to push his team 18 points clear.

The results: Premier League: Fulham 0 lost to Arsenal 3 (Magalhaes 21, Martinelli 26, Odegaard 45+2); Manchester United 0 drew with Southampton 0; West Ham United 1 (Benrahma 26-pen) drew with Aston Villa 1 (Watkins 17).

On Saturday: Premier League: Crystal Palace 0 lost to Manchester City 1 (Haaland 78-pen).
Serie A: Napoli 2 (Kvaratskhelia 60, Rrahmani 77) bt Atalanta 0; Bologna 0 drew with Lazio 0.
Bundesliga: Schalke 2 (Bulter 50, Karaman 79) drew with Borussia Dortmund 2 (Schlotterbeck 38, Guerreiro 60).

Brenda survives early Ankita challenge before prevailing

ITF WOMEN'S OPEN

Ashwin Achal
BENGALURU

Top-seed Brenda Fruhvirtova overcame a treacherous start to defeat India's Ankita Raina 0-6, 6-4, 6-0 in the singles final of the KPB Trust ITF Women's Open at the KSLTA Stadium here on Sunday.

Brenda, 15, found herself in a deep trouble at 0-6, 0-3. The Czech struggled to adjust to Ankita's lack of power in her groundstrokes, losing shape and hitting her shots long or into the net.

Bouncing back: Brenda shrugged off an initial setback to get into the groove and take the honours. K. MURALI KUMAR

Crushing backhands

Ankita's gameplan looked good enough to secure the biggest singles win of her career, until Brenda found her rhythm. Crushing backhands, Brenda's best weapon, found every corner of the court, as Ankita wilted under the incessant pressure.

On her early troubles, Brenda said, "The movement was not there; the shots were not there. Nothing was going my way. Mentally, it got hard for me. I couldn't do anything. So I just kept trying, and somehow got into my flow."

India has proven to be a lucky destination for the Fruhvirtova family, as Brenda's sister Linda had won the 2022 WTA Chennai Open. "Before coming to Bengaluru, Linda told me that this is a lucky place, and that I could be successful here. I believed it," Brenda said.

Ankita, who thrived on the support of a sizeable crowd, got off the blocks with a bang. She showed great court coverage, running at full tilt to easily reach Brenda's drop shots. Ankita kept the ball in play from the baseline, forcing a frustrated Brenda to make errors. The 30-year-old Indian, however, went flat after losing the second set.

Brenda won $6,094, while Ankita received $3,257.

K.P. Balaraj, the founder of KPB Family Trust, Sunil Yajaman, joint secretary of KSLTA, and Shruthi Iyer, Mrs India Universe 2021, attended the prize distribution function.